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UNIVERSITY SERMONS

NEW AND OLD.

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A SELECTION OF SERMONS PREACHED
BEFORE THE UNIVERSITIES OF
OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE,
1861—1887.

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1888

BY

C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

DEAN OF LLANDAFF, MASTER OF THE TEMPLE,
AND LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK.
1888

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PREFACE.

THE title-page will have explained sufficiently what this Volume is and is not.

During the last seven and twenty years the kindness of my own University has repeatedly called me to Cambridge as one of its Select Preachers: and since the two Universities have introduced the custom of interchanging their Pulpits I have more than once held the same office at Oxford also.

The Sermons thus preached were for many years published afterwards in a succession of small Volumes, of which several passed through more than one Edition, and some are now out

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of print. Since 1878 I have ceased to publish them, though a few have found their way into other Volumes.

The present work is a selection from the whole series of University Sermons, whether before published or not. Each of the smaller Volumes mentioned above has contributed one Sermon or more: two or three Sermons are reprinted from elsewhere: several have not before appeared in any permanent form. All are given in the order in which they were preached.

In preparing the Volume for publication, I have found not only many defects, but also some repetitions—not perhaps to be wondered at in the case of Addresses delivered at considerable intervals to like Congregations, and sometimes easily to be accounted for by my being called again and again to advocate one particular cause, that of Church Extension in the town and suburbs of Cambridge, on the opening Sundays of the Academical year. These appeals were too closely interwoven with the main topics of the Sermon to admit of being struck out, even if I

had not thought it better to adhere in all respects to the form of the original delivery.

Another misgiving, which must be felt, I suppose, more or less by all Preachers, arises from the difficulty, often the impossibility, of tracing up thoughts to their original sources, whether in reading or hearing. It may be hoped that, where there is no room for the suspicion of a conscious or intentional plagiarism, the mere assimilation of thought may be readily pardoned by those whose beneficent influence thus gains by diffusion.

I regard the publication of this Volume as closing a large and long chapter of my life. My periodical visits to Cambridge (some forty in number) as Select Preacher were for years the events and epochs of my Ministry. My sojourns on these occasions in the houses of honoured friends in various Colleges of the University are among my pleasantest and most sacred memories. To one of these friends, my pupil and my successor at Harrow, my thoughts are specially

turned at this time, when a new happiness has just been added to his Mastership of that great College of which I became a member the year after he was born. My love for Cambridge, the passion of my boyhood, constant through youth and manhood, is still strong in old age. May the same affection, brightened and purified, animate now a younger generation, inspiring a worthier and more fruitful, though it can scarcely be a more loyal or a more loving service.

LLANDAFF,
September, 1888.

I.

SUSPENSE.

St Luke xii. 29.

Neither be ye of doubtful mind.

THERE is a thing well known in human life, of which all of us, in some form or another, and in many forms, have already had experience. We have seen, for example, a vast concourse of people waiting and watching in the streets of a town for the arrival of some illustrious or royal person, whose coming is to be the signal for the commencement of a ceremony or spectacle awakening great public interest, or perhaps whose own presence is itself the thing looked for; the object of a concentrated devotion, or else of a curiosity scarcely less powerful and absorbing. We have seen them stand through long hours, careless of rain and wind, tolerant even of delay, provided that delay end not in entire disappointment. We have noticed the effect of such an expectation upon a population at other times industrious and unexcitable. We have seen how it stops the wheels of business, silences the cravings of appetite, and serves to impede the very flight of time.

We may turn the picture, and see the same thing at work, not in masses of men, but in individual instances; not in matters of pleasurable excitement, but in cases

of intense and thrilling anxiety. In a distant land a favourite son has been seeking his own fortunes, or serving his family and his country, in some post of civil or military responsibility: the last mail has brought tidings of a wound or a fever under which he was lying, a month ago, between life and death: it must be a whole fortnight before it is possible to hear of him again: already he may be in his grave: and his parents and sisters must endure through long nights and days the agonizing doubt, torturing themselves with conflicting guesses, and ignorant whether 'is' or 'was' be the tense in which to speak of one whose image is engraven on their memory and whose love is twined round their heart. Well can we conjecture, if we have not known it for ourselves, the effect of such an anxiety upon the life that has to be lived under it. How flat and colourless has become every common occupation. How has every interest faded, and every other care ceased. How difficult is it now to find even in prayer itself that relief which in other circumstances it has so often secured. How strange to pray about one who may already be in the unseen world—yet how impossible to pray about any other thing or any other person. Little more can be done than to bow beneath God's hand and suffer: to submit to live is as much as faith can rise to, and He who seeth in secret will accept the imperfect sacrifice.

This thing of which the effects are so different, according to the material on which it chances to operate, is yet, in its own nature, one and the same: we have one name for it, and we could not improve upon it: we call it 'suspense;' a state of suspense. 'Do not leave me in suspense:' 'It is not fair to keep people in suspense:'

'I can bear anything better than suspense:' such are the expressions by which we frequently give vent to our consciousness of the agitating, wearying, enfeebling, irritating effects of that condition of human life to which we have thus far pointed.

Would to God, my brethren—well may it be said in all seriousness and in much sadness—that suspense had no other scope than that hitherto described; that its operation were confined to those outward circumstances of life, in which it may possibly have a salutary influence, teaching, if it can teach nothing else, a lesson of patience, and yielding afterwards, if not at the time, some peaceable fruit of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby.

'Neither be ye of doubtful mind;' or, according to the marginal reading, 'live not in careful suspense:' such is our Lord's charge in the text. And He spoke it primarily—addressing Himself, as He commonly did, to the poor—of anxiety about food and clothing; of that ever-recurring question, 'What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?' which fills up so large a portion of the threescore years and ten of the labourer and the mechanic. If I were speaking now to an ordinary congregation, such as that which is elsewhere committed to my charge, I might dwell with advantage upon this first and most obvious aspect of the words before us; reproving earthly anxiety from the arguments which the context would furnish, its futility, its needlessness, its faithlessness, and its folly. But here a different use of the text forces itself upon our notice.

Suspense has a wide and powerful action upon the things of this life. We are in suspense oftentimes: now

about some desired prize, now about some apprehended danger; now for another, now for ourselves; now about the doubtful success of some honest toil, now about casualties and possibilities over which we have no control. But not thus only. There is such a thing as suspense in the world of thought also. Suspense largely enters into men's religious opinions. And shall I be thought harsh or uncharitable if I say—certainly it is not in that spirit, but in one of deep concern and lively sympathy, that I say it—that it is characteristic of these times, in no common degree, to be in suspense both about faith and duty? Does not He who alone knows what is in man behold perhaps, as He looks down upon this congregation, many a mind halting between two opinions even as to Himself, the Propitiation and the Redeemer—much more, as to everything short of this one? What word could more accurately describe the intellectual condition, at least, of very many, as to the revelations of the Bible, than that which He has Himself selected to describe a forbidden state of mind as to things earthly? Live not. He says, in suspense: and the word in the original is one word; the same which denotes a substance hovering in the air or fluctuating upon the waters, as opposed to that which has a sure support and standing-place on the firm and solid earth. There are many persons—in every age, it may be—certainly in our own—whose whole life is passed in this balancing, floating, wavering state of mind as to the truth of God, as to the revelations of the Bible.

And there are some things about which suspense is at least harmless. In early life, more particularly, a promiscuous positiveness is as unchristian as it is unpleasing.

A man who is sure about everything may be suspected of having proved nothing. It is always easy to borrow opinions in the gross from other men; always easy to take what is called a party line, to adopt the views of a book, a paper, a teacher, or a school, and thenceforward to see with another's eyes and speak with another's tongue. This saves much trouble; enables an inferior mind to wear the plumes of a superior; precludes the necessity of much anxious thought, and (what is in itself no small comfort to the weak) secures to us companions if not followers. We see too much of this also in our days. It is the abuse of decision, as the other is the abuse of enquiry. It is the precipitancy of unscrupulousness, at best of weakness; sometimes it is the indication of a radical unsoundness of character, or the awkward disguise of a deep latent scepticism.

It is not amiss to be in suspense about some things even in religion: it is not well to be positive about everything even in matters of duty. Our Lord would have every man to be well persuaded in his own mind, not in another's. And well persuaded in his own mind a man cannot be without thought and without examination: I might almost say, without having once questioned, if not doubted. To take a thing for granted—more especially if it be one of those highest things of all, in which man lives—is not to exercise faith, but to indulge credulity.

All these things it is right to say, in order to prevent a serious misuse of the great principle laid down in the text. The text does not forbid enquiry, and the text does not encourage presumption. But this surely it says to us, It is ill for a man to live in suspense as to the

essentials of the Gospel. We admit that there may be whole provinces and regions of thought into which it is not necessary for every man to enter. We admit that there may be verses and chapters of the Bible, statements of fact and statements of doctrine, which have been variously interpreted by various minds, and as to the true meaning of which a man may without injury to his soul live and die in suspense. But we strongly and earnestly protest against the carrying of this concession into the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. There are truths which to reject is to refuse to eat the bread, to breathe the air, to see the light, which God has given for the life of man's soul. There are truths which to doubt is to dispense with, and which to dispense with is to deny. Of such a nature is, above all others—for I will go at once to the root of the matter—the Scriptural doctrine of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ the Son of God? Is He one with the Father? Did He come from God and return to God? Did He bear my sins—in such sense that for His sake all sin can be forgiven? Is He now alive? Does He hear prayer? Has He all power in heaven and in earth? Does God for His sake give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Do the Gospels contain a true record of His life and of His death, and the Gospels and Epistles a faithful account of His teaching? Did Christ in a true and real sense bring to us a revelation? not a mere repetition, with more or less of added force and clearness, of the conclusions of reason or of the instincts of conscience; but something which He knew because He came down from heaven, something which was His as it is not ours, something which God sends and by

which God will judge? It is quite evident that the question of faith or suspense upon these topics is a question, literally, of vital moment. A man who believes these things will live in one way, and a man who is in suspense about them must live in another way. For I speak not to those who call nothing life but its outward acts: those who hear me all recognize a life which has its spring within, and feel that it is in its relations to God above that its workings towards man below find their motive and their value. And therefore I say here, without doubt of its acceptance, that a man who believes in Christ as the Son of God, as the Propitiation for sin, as the living Saviour, as the Revealer of God, as the Giver of the Spirit, not only ought to live, but must and will live, quite differently from the man who is in suspense about Him in all or in some of these particulars. It is not that the former has done with enquiry: it is not that he blindly accepts even what the best of men tell him as to the meaning of Christ's words: it is not that he thinks himself debarred from the freest examination of the credentials of each item of doctrine, or of the text or the authorship or the circumstances of the passage or of the book itself in which that particular doctrine is supposed to be contained. But the difference between him and the other, in these respects, is, that the one does and the other does not enquire and examine *as a believer;* as one who only waits to be sure that his Lord has spoken, and spoken certainly this and not that, before he receives into his mind and into his soul that revelation which he has thus tried and certified.

Nor is it, I must beg you to observe, that even the

great central and essential truth of all has been accepted blindly or credulously. There are doubtless those—and happiest of all men are they—who have been nurtured from their childhood not only in the 'admonition' but in the faith of Christ; who know not when they first began to believe, because faith has been in them like the shining light which shineth gradually more and more unto the perfect day. Shall we call even this a credulous or a blind persuasion? Great as are the intellectual credentials of the Gospel, there is a greater still than they; and that is, the satisfaction of the heart in it, and the power of it upon the life: show us the man who has been made what he is, in all kindliness and truthfulness and diligence and purity, by growing up in the faith of Christ, and we will welcome him as one who has the soundest and surest of all reasons for believing, nay, as one who not only has, but in turn is, a sufficient proof of the truth and of the greatness and of the risen life of Jesus. That man does not believe blindly. He, above others, can tell whom and why he has believed. We may well envy him his evidences. But another, who lacks these, or possesses them less perfectly, may yet have had his own. There are those—we thank God for it—who have come to faith later, but by a way sure and certain, though less peaceful and perhaps more circuitous. There are those—the history of this University is full of such examples—who, amidst the manifold workings of intellectual life within at the opening of manhood, have found it necessary to entertain the greatest question of all, not only in the form, What must they do to be saved? but rather perhaps in another shape, What is truth, eternal truth, Divine truth? has God indeed spoken in

anything save conscience? is there a Revelation, and, if there be, what says it? And out of these first questionings, honestly entertained and earnestly grappled with, there has arisen a conviction not to be shaken again for ever, that in deed and in truth the Word of Revelation (as we possess it) is no cunningly-devised fable; that in it there is the true message, disclosing the true Messenger; that He to whom every line points, even in places where it names Him not, is the very light and life of man, and that he who follows Him shall not abide and shall never walk in darkness. O set this man—set either of these two men—in contrast with the man still in suspense; and who does not exclaim, Let me live his life—let me die his death?

I know that the other may be a pleasing man: his very deficiency is, as man judges, half a virtue. Suspense in matters of religion begins oftentimes in a mere excess of candour. 'There is so much to be said on both sides of everything. All evidence is so doubtful: all motives are so mixed: all conduct is such a compound: it is so difficult to arrive at certainty in things ancient, in things resting on written testimony, in things largely mingled with miracle, in things involving suspensions of ordinary laws by Divine interference and interposition. It may be true: I hope, even more than I fear, that it may be true. I admire the character of Christ: I love His tenderness towards human infirmity, His condescension towards the young, the ignorant, and the sinful, His unwearied patience, His holiness of life, His expansive and inexhaustible charity. Perhaps He was more than this: perhaps there was something in His death beyond the mere example. Yes, I can imagine something of

a propitiation, something of a sacrifice: not a substitution, but still something which human language, in its necessary imperfection, might style a mediation and an atonement. Yes, it may be so: sometimes I can almost trust in it. But, on the whole, it is safer perhaps to take a slightly different ground: I will rely upon God's mercy: I will hope that He who made us made not so many of us for nought: I will cherish the hope that, if I do my best, if I am kind and generous and serviceable to others, if I do what I can to live a good life, if I am a useful member of society, and if I look, all along, to God's providence and protection and guidance and mercy, all will be well with me at the last; I may lay me down in peace and take my rest; I will enjoy God's gifts, and trust Him with the future.'

Thoughts such as these, my brethren, are the religion of many: they are their best thoughts. Suffer the word of exhortation. 'Is this quite the language of the Bible?' A few phrases from the Bible are mixed up in it: but open that book—does it seem quite to sanction this easy, this confiding view of life? Does it hang well together with, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able?' No, such views may be the religion of a shut Bible, but they are not the religion of a Bible opened: God give us all something better than that to live by and to die with.

Suspense as to the essentials of faith is a state always of spiritual indolence. Not indeed if it be the involuntary suspense of a man eagerly seeking light; doubting in earnest; that is, doubting only till he can find his way, and honestly asking it. Out of *such*

suspense there may well grow full decision. And, even while it lasts, God and His angels may be spectators and helpers of the conflict: over such doubting there may soon be joy in heaven. But I speak of the man who acquiesces in suspense. I speak of that state in which a man, willingly or else through mere carelessness, goes on through a whole period of life, perhaps through the whole of life, doubting without questioning; cherishing without resolving his difficulties; taking a candid view (as it is called) of each point presented to him, without feeling that life and death may hang, for him, upon the issue. How sadly, how painfully, does it fall upon the ear of a Christian man, to hear matters touching the very life of souls discussed in common society in the midst and in the tone of politics or of scandals; to see the precious casket of Divine truth passed from hand to hand for trivial or jesting comment, as though within it were no perfume of life unto life or else of death unto death. What an indication of the utter absence of vigour and earnestness is that condition of suspense—not of hostility to the Gospel, not of total unbelief, but just of suspense—in which so large a part of our generation lives, we must fear, and dies.

In particular, let me say that a state of suspense in religion must necessarily be a prayerless life. 'That your prayers be not hindered' is given in Scripture as a motive for living in peace one with another: is it not a just motive also for terminating the suspense of faith? 'How shall they call,' asks the Apostle, 'on Him in whom they have not believed?' 'He that cometh to God,' another Scripture says, 'must believe that He is.' We may be quite sure that a man who neither has

made, nor is engaged in making, his decision as to the true person and work and will of his Saviour, is a man who knows nothing of the power and of the grace of prayer. If he hates his suspense, if he is ashamed of it, if he feels its irksomeness and (indeed we may say it) its bondage, then probably he does attempt prayer: he kneels down at the accustomed times, and with many wanderings and many strugglings asks for the accustomed things, for forgiveness and help, using the accustomed names for Him to whom, and for Him through whom, and for Him for whom, Christians are wont to pray: but, alas, how poor, himself being the judge, is the thing thus performed—how dry and barren the ground beneath him, how dull and dark the heaven above. Yes, even as it is written, so may it be said of him, 'Thou, O God, hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that his prayers should not pass through.' More often, as about other things, so about prayer itself, he is still in suspense; thinks it a pleasing and a soothing custom, admits its salutary reaction upon the person who prays, but is careful to remind both others and himself that it is irrational to suppose that prayer can affect the Divine counsels, and finds, according to the invariable rule of God's spiritual procedure, that, what he himself expects not, he himself does not receive.

My brethren, if in any of the words used to describe this condition there has been aught of coldness or of harshness, be well assured that it has been most involuntary. No one, I should imagine, who at all knows himself—certainly no one who knows anything of Christ—can view the state indicated without much of sympathy as well as much of sadness. And when our ears

have been vexed with any of those clamorous and indiscriminating revilings by which religious zeal is too ready to overbear all freedom of thought or speech on matters of Christian doctrine, we find ourselves turning almost with refreshment to one of those candid minds which seem incapable of sweeping judgments, balance nicely conflicting arguments, and express themselves, even with regard to essential truths, in a tone of caution and almost of hesitation. More especially is this the case in youth: a generous impulse drives men at that age to the defence of the assailed: and it is well if, in their just abhorrence of unfairness and intolerance, they forget not sometimes to distinguish between the Gospel as it speaks in Scripture and the Gospel as it is misused by man. At such times there is an aggravated danger of suspense about the truth. At such times it is doubly necessary that we be reminded of the distinction between candour and indifference, and urged to take heed lest, in holding the truth in reason and speaking the truth in love, we be ceasing to hold it in decision and to speak it in power.

I probably address some to-day, who, if the language employed has not entirely failed of impression, are conscious that they, they themselves, are 'of doubtful mind,' as the text expresses it—are in a state of fluctuation and suspense—as to the word and work, the person and authority, of our Lord and Saviour.

To such I would say, first of all, Never allow yourselves to acquiesce in this state. If it is yours, admit it: but never rest in it; and, let me add, as a hint not without its use, never take credit for it. Never allow yourself to be thought well of for a candour of which the

two largest ingredients may be indolence and cowardice. Yes, I repeat the word—cowardice: the worst sort of cowardice: fear of consequences; fear of that to which decision of doubts might possibly summon you in the way either of opinion or of conduct. Do not for one moment regard it as a fit state for a responsible and immortal being to be living in, to be practically uncertain whether he has a Saviour, or where, if so, He is to found.

And next I would say, Face your difficulties. Be not timid towards them. Some men deal with religious doubt as some men deal with bodily disease: they dare not ascertain it: they had rather let it gather strength by delay than submit it to that treatment which, if taken in time, will certainly heal. Be not ye thus unwise. Bring your mind to account. Take the measure of your difficulties. As you examine them, some will disappear. Register the rest. Put them by. Three months hence, when you look at them again, they will be fewer. But, whatever you do, let them not gather strength by your timidity. Give them not the added importance of mystery. Force them to a reckoning. See how large they are, or how small. Make them produce their witnesses. And then listen to counter-evidence. If there are some objections to belief, are there none to unbelief? In particular, I would urge you to a decision with reference to the great question of all. Minor matters can wait. Even some doctrines of the Gospel, in the state of mind now referred to, can wait, and with advantage. But the great question of all waits not, or waits only with infinite risk. Who and what is Jesus Christ? That question must be answered. If He is what Christians think Him,

I ought to be making use of Him every day. Each prayer that ignores Him, each day in which prayer through Him is silent, is an affront to God, on the supposition that He is. Settle that question. You can do so as well now as at any future day; and the present only is your own. Other men have had to do this before you; have had to do it, and have done it, at your present time of life, by careful and earnest thought, definitely, decisively, and for ever. Even so do ye. Balance the question, and strike the balance. Remember, in many things we are compelled to act, and to believe too, upon less than absolute certainty: be not unreasonable in your demands: God gives proof enough, but He relieves us not, in this world, from the necessity of using what He gives, of putting it together, of pondering it, of trying it well by study and reflection, and of forming a judgment upon it on the whole. Remember too, certainty, assurance, conviction, grows, like other things, by use: act now, believe now, upon a balance of judgment, and by degrees you will advance from belief to knowledge. 'Then shall I know, even as also I am known.'

Lastly, if you be a man in suspense about the Gospel, be the more resolute to be practical. Do not nurse your doubts in a meditative seclusion. Carry them out. Let yours be an active life. Go and visit the poor. See what life is, and what its real wants are. Observe for yourself what a needy suffering man requires for his soul's comfort; what a dying man requires to carry him through the dark valley. You will thus learn more of theology in an hour than in the learned studies and meditations of a year. And, if the state of your religious convictions is not yet perhaps such as to make it honest

for you, or possible, to offer instruction in these things to the ignorant, or consolation from these sources to the suffering, then turn to the body: pity disease, relieve pain, give to the hungry: try to make some abode of poverty less wretched, some bed of sickness less desolate: and thank God when by any means private or public—by your own unaided exertion, or through some charitable Institution like that for which I ask your alms this day[1]—He enables you, even in one instance, to imitate the work of Him who upon earth went about doing good, and of whom it is written that, in every sense, bodily, mental, or spiritual, in which the words can be uttered, 'Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.'

[1] A Collection was made after this Sermon in aid of the Funds of Addenbrooke's Hospital.

II.

CHOICE OF PROFESSIONS.

Acts xxii. 10.

What shall I do, Lord?

THE words are addressed to a Person, and they ask of that Person the guidance of a life. The speaker, a moment ago, was travelling in hot haste from Jerusalem to Damascus, with an object full in view, and every energy of his soul bent on its accomplishment. Zealous for God's honour, and believing it to be at stake; considering the new religion to be a dangerous error, and deeming no mode of extirpation so effectual as that of vigorous persecution; he has obtained from the chief priests authority to persecute, and carries with him a commission which will place at his command the liberty and the life of those who have presumed to innovate upon the national faith. Such was the character, such the present mission, of him whose words are before us. Not a character likely to be affected by idle imaginations or vain visions. Not a mission likely to terminate in its very opposite, or to be followed by a life spent in preaching the faith which as yet he is labouring to destroy. But one moment has upset and reversed all. A bright light from heaven, shining above and distinguishable from the blaze of a fiery Eastern sun; and then the

voice of words; one grave question, mysterious in its source but resistless in its authority; a question proposed in a language of earth, but speaking of one persecuted in heaven; this has sufficed to change the whole course and current of a life; this has at once turned activity into prostration, zeal into fear, pride into abasement, and fury against others into anxiety for himself. 'I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.'

My brethren, the more we reflect upon this marvellous history, the more real does it become to us, the more striking in its incidents, the more ample in its instruction for ourselves.

We are assembled together on Trinity Sunday; that great festival of our Church which sums up in one last commemoration all the scattered items of doctrine which have diversified thus far the course of the Christian year. Trinity Sunday is, in brief, the Festival of Revelation. It gathers into one whole all that we have been taught of God; solemnly charges us to remember the primeval disclosure, 'The Lord our God is one Lord;' warns us that we suffer not any diversity of operations to make us lose sight of the unity of the Godhead; bids us be careful how we suffer in ourselves any such thought of mediation or of atonement, of grace or of inspiration, as might separate into three wills or three essences those Holy Persons, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

whom the Scriptures of truth everywhere recognize and reveal; and yet, on the other hand, reminds us how necessary to the Christian's hope and to the Christian's life is a true faith in each one of these; how incomplete and how formidable were the conception of a God who created, without the further disclosure of a Divine Person who redeemed, and of a Divine Person who sanctifies. Trinity Sunday is not, as some would make it, the commemoration of a formal doctrine, for which man has had to invent a term, and in which the life of the soul is scarcely interested or concerned. Rather is it the commemoration of the fulness of God, of the completeness of His work for us, of His nearness to us, of His minute as well as boundless care and love toward us; that which fills up what else would be most defective, that which combines what else were most disjointed, brings into harmony conflicting attributes, and gives distinctness and personality to the mysterious and the abstract. This it is which brings God home to us as a Father, and enables us, whenever and however far we have wandered, to say in our hearts with a resolute hope, 'I will arise and return.' This it is which turns the character of Christ, and the example of Christ, and the sufferings of Christ, into a living and life-giving trust; saying to us, He who lived for you, and He who died, is in deed and in truth your Lord and your God. This it is which transforms the influence of the Spirit into the sympathy of a Person; of One who helps our prayers, strengthens our infirmities, is grieved with our sins, and glad when we are comforted. And this it is which, instead of leaving us with three separate agencies, binds them all for us into one; calls them, not Three, but, a Trinity;

assures us that the will of the Saviour and the will of the Comforter is not less the will of the Father; that the Father gave the Son because He loved us, and that the Father and the Son will come to us in the Spirit and make an abode in us not as Three but as One. Trinity Sunday is the Festival of Revelation; and Revelation itself is the Revelation, not of three Persons only, but of one God.

And He it was, even this one God, speaking, as He always speaks, by the mouth of the everliving Saviour, before whom Saul of Tarsus lay low upon the earth, and said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' O, my brethren, it is the thing which we need, every one of us, to be able to look up to heaven and behold a Person there; to turn from a creed of lifeless abstractions, and to receive in its stead the revelation of a living God; to be able to say, not only, I believe in the omnipotence of God, in His eternity, in His holiness and justice and truth, but, I believe in God: not only, I believe in the incarnation of Christ, in His atonement, in His mediation and intercession, but, I believe in Jesus: not only, I believe in the influence of the Holy Spirit, in His operation, in His converting and quickening grace, but, I believe in the Holy Ghost. We want to be able to look up to heaven, and know that behind that screen, that veil, that cloud—for it is nothing more—there is One to whom we are something and who is something to us; One to whom we may speak, speak in the heart, and be sure that He hears; One of whom we may ask a question, and know that it will be answered; One to whom we may apply, and not doubt that He will help—devote ourselves, and know that He accepts the sacrifice. It is in this turning

from the doctrine to the Person, in this sight of Him who is invisible, that the essence of conversion, and the power of spiritual life, really consists. Then at last may it be said of each one of us, as it was said, in the very crisis of his history, of him of whom the text tells us, 'Behold, he prayeth.' For then, then at length, will prayer have become a power and a reality, being addressed to One who is, and who is known, by one who wants, and who expects.

'What shall I do, Lord?' The words are few, but they are significant and they are pregnant words. On St Paul's lips, at that moment, they meant, 'I see my past life to have been, with all its propriety of conduct and with all its zeal for God, a folly and a madness; I see my boasted privileges a delusion, my treasured knowledge a lie; I see that what I thought obedience was rebellion, and what I deemed a mortal sin was in truth the very will of God. And now, Lord, in this uprooting of all that was, be Thou my Guide into that which shall be: I know not—teach Thou me—what is truth: I know not—teach Thou me—what is duty: in this hour of confusion and utter darkness, be Thou the lamp of my path, the light of my steps. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

And the same words had for him thenceforward a fresh meaning with every successive circumstance of life from his conversion to his martyrdom. We will not stay to trace it through changes in which St Paul was but the type of all Christians. When the path of duty is beset with unexpected difficulties, or when it seems to branch off, this way and that, in ambiguous directions; then, again and again, has been heard in

every generation from a thousand hearts, the cry for guidance and for decision, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And when at some new turn in life's journey it has become necessary to choose between conflicting claims, to do this and refuse that; and the voice of conscience is indistinctly heard, and the arguments of the natural judgment evenly balanced, so that we know not how to walk and to please God in a conjuncture felt to be critical and big with consequences; then too has the cry gone up, and never in vain from sincere and trusting hearts, into the ear of One not seen but loved, 'What shall I do, Lord? O Lord, I am oppressed: undertake for me!'

My brethren, there is one question which presses heavily, or which ought to do so, at that point of life at which many members of this congregation stand to-day. There is one question which concerns, not a particular act of life only, but the whole of life; a question upon the answer to which will depend, for each one of you, the occupations in which, and the circumstances amongst which, this brief but momentous being shall be used and spent. You will all perceive that I speak of what is called the choice of a profession. A 'profession:' that branch of knowledge which you shall profess to have made your own; that department of human affairs which you shall profess to understand; that employment, be it what it may, for which you shall profess yourself to be qualified. And the 'choice' of a profession. Considerable latitude is allowed, in these days, to all young men—entire and absolute freedom to most young men—in determining for themselves that line in which they will serve their generation

and exercise the talents with which God has endowed them. It is due to us, it is due to you, that it should be so. It is the right of a responsible being to be left free in this momentous choice. No man may deliver his brother, no father his son, in the day of God's judgment: therefore no man should prescribe to his brother, no father to his son, when childhood and boyhood are ended, in what particular duties, under what particular influences, he shall spend those years of activity for which he solely and singly will have to give account.

For great indeed are the issues of that choice. Not more various are individual gifts, than individual tendencies, liabilities, and temptations. A profession suitable to one may be misery, may be ruin, to another. I speak not here—though the consideration can never be unimportant—of the chances of success or failure in the race of professional distinction. I speak rather of the chances of the soul in this life and for eternity. And I say that there are constitutions of mind and spirit as diverse in their openness to particular influences for good or evil as are bodily constitutions in their proneness to particular forms of disease. As the physician will prescribe for one a warm climate and for another a bracing, sending this man for health to a region of the world which to that man would be death itself; even so there are employments, callings, whole professions, which for one man may be perilous in the extreme, and for another harmless or even salubrious. Woe to him, therefore, who lets himself drift into a profession, without much serious reflection and great searchings of heart. Woe to him who suffers accident, persuasion, inclination alone, to preside over such a

choice. Nay, even gifts, even powers, even great and marked capacities for a particular calling, are not of themselves decisive. These things are elements in the question, but they are not the whole of it. They all demand to be taken into account, but they have no right, singly or together, to settle it. I know that natural faults, constitutional tendencies, pronenesses to particular forms of evil, are neither created nor destroyed by circumstances: it is not a profession that makes nor a profession that can eradicate one of them. But one profession may foster, may encourage, may develope a particular evil tendency, and another may check, suppress, counteract it. And, alas, how few think of these things in choosing. How many, for example, have gone to the Bar, not although, but because, they saw in themselves, or their friends admired in them, a promptitude of resource or an ingenuity of invention which might successfully distort truth and make the worse appear the better cause. And how many have gone into the Army, not though, but because, they were already too much addicted to a habit of mental indolence, and saw before them in that one direction a possibility of passing decently through life without exertion. If the one had foreseen all that was involved in his choice, he would have felt his readiness of speech and his quickness of invention a reason against rather than for the calling to which he was inclined. And if the other had foreseen all that was involved in his choice, he would have felt it his duty rather to force himself into mental exertion at the risk of inferior success, than to supersede that outward necessity for it from which he more than other men

would have profited. But who does foresee all that hangs upon this first decision? Or who, almost, regards with due seriousness his inability to foresee? Who, my brethren, amongst you who are now on the threshold of active life, is really pondering as in God's sight the choice of his earthly calling, taking the measure, so far as he is able, of his own gifts and failings, estimating duty in the light not of time only but of eternity, and, under a deep conviction of his own ignorance and blindness, asking, day by day, of One above, the very question of the text, 'What shall I do, Lord? Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'

It is not much, perhaps, that man can do to answer this question for another. And yet it seems as though the ministry of God's Word, in this place at least, ought not always to be silent on a matter so pressing and so momentous. You will not indeed expect a clergyman, and a parochial clergyman, to be a wholly impartial judge of the conflicting claims of English professions. His life is given to one work; and he knows, of course, better than others, how much that one work wants men. It is natural that he should feel, when he visits once again these scenes of his youth; more especially, when he is set to preach where once he listened, to endeavour to do in the humblest degree for others that which was once done for him from the same pulpit by great men numbered now (in many cases) among the dead; what it would be for his beloved Church if the ranks of her ministry could be largely replenished from the very best and most gifted of those to whom he speaks; if such a sense of the capabilities of this service, of its dignity, of its power, and of its happiness too, could be here awakened, as should

make it indeed an ambition to embrace it; not a thing to which here and there knowledge and ability may condescend, but rather that which shall be the desire and the aspiration of the very ablest minds and the very noblest spirits, even as he believes it to be the most direct and the most immediate service of Him from whom every gift comes, and to whose glory all should redound.

I speak not to disparage other callings, even in their bearing upon religion. None knows better than a parochial clergyman how feeble, how ineffective, in any place, much more in the world at large, must be that ministry which is not seconded by the zeal and comforted by the sympathy of Christian laymen. But here, and on this day, bear with me if, in the later words of him whom the text recalls to us, I venture to 'magnify my own office.' Trinity Sunday is a day of Ordinations. Wherever the Church of Christ has spread itself throughout the whole earth, this day is adding to its ranks new soldiers, new officers, of the Cross. It cannot be unseasonable to-day to speak to you, as time and strength may permit, of the capabilities and of the requirements of this special service. If by God's blessing upon the words spoken but one heart should be stirred to desire this commission, or but one difficulty removed out of the way of him who has been fearing or hesitating to seek it, it will not be for nothing that I have been permitted to visit you, nor will it be without rejoicing that I return to my appointed place of labour.

1. The capabilities, I said, of the Christian ministry. Who can overrate them? What is it to have that Word of God, to which others can but occasionally have recourse in brief moments of devotion, given to us for

our study, our meditation, and our stewardship, all the day? What is it to have that charity which with others can be but the employment of rare intervals of absorbing and engrossing business, given to us as the very work of life? to have the chosen occupation of our Lord Himself —'who went about doing good'—consigned to us as our office and our profession? What is it to have a recognized position amongst men as their friend, adviser, and helper, in things pertaining to God? to be allowed, and even expected, to fly to 'those who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity,' with a message of cheering and consolation from God Himself? What a help should this be to ourselves in living a life of faith and hope: what an aid in walking seriously, thoughtfully, consistently: what an assistance in maintaining always that 'conscience void of offence' which, whether as Christ's ministers or as Christ's servants, is essential as much to happiness now as to hope hereafter.

And who shall limit the capabilities of one special office of our ministry—the much despised ordinance of preaching? I know indeed that preaching may be a very poor thing; a form to the speaker, and therefore a weariness to the hearer. With many, sermons are a very byword of dulness: God forgive those whose carelessness and coldness, far more than any incapacity, have made them so. But I know also—for I have felt it—what a sermon may be. I have heard sermons delivered from this very place which made the heart burn and the ears tingle; sermons of which the lapse of a quarter of a century has failed to dull the recollection either of sense or sound. I speak to some this day who have within

them thoughts and ideas, convictions and aspirations too, which they feel that they cannot rest without communicating. They look on already with no indifferent eye upon the cares and woes, the confusions and the perplexities, of human life. They have found for themselves—and they know it—a standing-place amidst doubts, and a covert from storms, by which they behold others still vexed and buffeted. They have sought, and at last have found, that in Christ Himself, crucified first, then risen, there is peace and rest and healing. They have found, and others have not found. What will it be to them to be commissioned in due time to preach? to have an audience gathered for them, without obtrusion or presumption of their own, and to be secure of a hearing? O, what will preaching be in such hands? Where will be dulness and tameness, where will be poor thoughts and a languid utterance in the preacher, where will be drowsiness, inattention, and weariness in those that hear, when mind and heart and soul are full of their subject, and when a definite and cherished aim gives point and directness to every word spoken? Depend upon it, preaching, however it may fail of its effect, has every possible chance still given to it. The machinery is ready for use: it needs but the hand to move, but the spirit to animate it. There is stillness, there is patience, there is expectation, in many there is desire too, a hungering and thirsting after edification, to which it ought to be a delight to minister, which it is a sin of sins wilfully to disappoint. Let more men of thought and culture, more men of mark and power, above all, more men of purpose and devotion, give themselves to the work; and one who knows something of our town and

something of our country congregations may be listened to when he promises that such preaching shall never lack attention, that such preaching shall never lose its labour.

But I would tell of the capabilities of the Christian ministry in its more private workings. It is a great mistake—I had almost said it is a great impiety—to represent the ministry as needing no gifts, or as needing gifts only for its preaching. In these days, at all events, there is no gift however eminent which need be thrown away in a parish however obscure. Wherever the encounter is made hand to hand between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of Satan, between truth and falsehood, between faith and infidelity, between righteousness and sin, there is room, and there is a demand, for all gifts. It is only for vague and general and distant dealing that small powers or small efforts can be deemed sufficient. Let a Christian minister single out his man—and it is only in single combat that some of the greatest victories of the ministry can be won—let him propose to himself as a definite object the turning of some sinner from the error of his ways; the recovery of some drunkard to sobriety, of some adulterer to chastity, of some profane man to reverence, of some infidel to faith and to worship; and assuredly he will find it necessary to try every resource with which skill and persuasiveness can furnish him, as well as that higher and more availing weapon still, which can be taken only by effectual fervent prayer out of the very armoury of God. But with these aids the words will ever and anon be verified, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' Again and again will God give the

victory, not to human pride or human skill, but to the working of His Holy Spirit in the heart first, and then by the lips, of His commissioned ministering servant. And men are finding out in these days that no mere machinery of evangelization—no mere building of churches, and no mere multiplication of services—will do Christ's work effectually, without a constant personal search of the lost, and a warm individual sympathy with the struggling. The Church will not reach at all those who most need her, unless she goes after them: it is a later part of the work, one which testifies of its all but accomplishment, when they seek her. Judge ye, my brethren, whether this sort of work can be done without a large expenditure of ministration; whether one man in a parish of five or of ten thousand souls can avail anything in this labour; the toil of battling singly with hearts unwilling to be conquered, of reclaiming one by one lives sunk and lost in sin.

Strange seems it—strange would it seem, knew we not the cause—that to vigorous and enterprising men any calling should be more attractive than one so full of human interest, so imperious in its demand for human energy. A lawyer may be admirably furnished with every gift of knowledge and of eloquence, and yet he may spend some of the best years of manhood in waiting for a client. A physician may possess science which would qualify him for high advancement, and yet linger long without being summoned to the bedside of one patient. A soldier may be shut up for months together in some gloomy barrack, or live through a forty years' peace and die without once seeing service. But a clergyman has from the day of his ordination clients and

patients, battles and sieges, enough and to spare. He waits not for the chances of an opening; he needs not, for his high calling, the advantages of a connection or a patron: around his doors are gathered the souls which ask his service, within his parish rages the battle in which he is to win his crown. Happy he who sees these things, and suffers not his ministry to lack its true reward by turning aside to a recompence low and illusory. Let other professions seek their success in comforts, riches, and honours of this life: he misses both worlds, who first enters a calling of which the very title is holy, and then desecrates it by the pursuit of objects as earthly in their nature as they are precarious and almost casual in their attainment.

2. And well may the Apostle's question sound in our ears, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Is it indeed so, that any man of vigorous mind or of ample knowledge may at once transfer himself to that ministry of which we have thus spoken? Is nothing wanted but vigour? nothing but a humane care for others? nothing but a disinterested aim and a willingness to forego ease and honour? Must there not be something yet beyond these things, if a man would make full proof of his ministry? Yes, there is one thing, on which if we dwell not it must be because its necessity is obvious; a true faith in God through Christ; a real devotion to Him; and a life cleansed and consecrated by His indwelling Spirit. It would be a disastrous day for the Church of Christ, on which the door of its special service were thrown wide open to all comers who could just profess a desire for the amelioration of the condition of the poor by the elevation of their social position or the rectifica-

tion of their moral standard. These objects point not to Ordination: they belong rather to lay callings: happy are those times, happy is that country, which, like our own, can point to many honoured persons, in private, professional, or public life, who are diligently pursuing them. For a clergyman's work there is required not only a charitable spirit, not only a humane intention; not faith only, not devotion, not blamelessness of life only; but preparation—yes, my brethren, a special preparation. Narrow as much as you will the compass of theology; cast out of it all that you may of collateral and subsidiary information; you must at least leave to it the Bible and its interpretation; you must at least secure your congregations from ignorance and from error as to the subject-matter of our teaching: and who that knows anything of the Bible can be unaware of the amplitude of that field of study which is contained within these closest and narrowest bounds?

But there is much more than this, which ought to fall, and which I am persuaded does fall, within the scope of the theological discipline of this University. In these times there is need that our clergy be not only pious but well-read and (which is sometimes a different thing) well-educated men. It is not right that in our great manufacturing towns of the north it should be in the power of a hired emissary of infidelity, to defy with impunity, Sunday after Sunday, by public placard, the ministers of the Gospel. It is not right that working men, ignorant perhaps but intelligent and honest-hearted, should be left to grapple as they may, unaided by their pastor, with the scoffs and taunts of the infidel. These things are a new sign of the times, and men must

be educated in the full view of them. Nor is it right that, apart from the open avowal of an antichristian purpose, it should be in the power of any writer, unanswered and unexposed, to dress up old objections as if they were new, and to trouble the minds of unlearned believers by assertions which a deeper knowledge would show perhaps to be inaccurate or unfounded. These things make a great demand upon those to whom the charge of clerical education is entrusted. They ought to be intimately and industriously acquainted with the present condition of the minds of thinking men. They ought to have the tenderest sympathy with real difficulties, and to treat with manly respect anxious doubts which they do not share. They must beware above all things of seeming to stifle enquiry or to dread discovery. They must religiously abstain from all half-answers. No man loses the respect of the young by confessing himself unacquainted with a fact at issue, or unable on the instant to repel attack. But every man loses, and deserves to lose, the respect of listeners young or old, if he so far presumes upon the ignorance of his hearer as to put him off with an answer which he himself who speaks does not feel to be conclusive. These things are of the very alphabet of education. And these things, practised by the teacher, will in turn be imitated and handed on by the learner. A clergyman thus trained by example in habits of candour and of truthfulness will go forth to his Parish, when the time comes, to bear and to forbear; in meekness instructing the ignorant, in simplicity reassuring the doubter, in the power of a true faith convincing or else refuting the gainsayer.

And shall I be pardoned if I presume to say here

how important I deem it that clerical education, so far as it consists in learning, should be carried on in our Universities rather than in smaller and more special training-fields? We do not want—which is the very best that can be hoped from such methods—to see one man's mind stamped whole upon a section of the clergy. The freer intercourse which a University offers of mind with mind, the larger choice and mutual correction of instructors, not to mention the ampler gifts of learning and ability which such a place affords in its teachers, are invaluable aids in the study of a true theology. Other systems may have their advantage—I doubt not that it is so—in peculiar cases: there are men for whom the temptations of college life have been too strong, and who need to be taken aside from it to learn truth and to practise duty in what is for them a safer atmosphere: but the University, in my opinion, would prove herself most unfaithful to the work with which God has entrusted her, if she allowed it to be said that her best students must turn elsewhere for their theology, because she refused to them either opportunities of instruction or a stimulus to their use.

But has not theology its art as well as its science? Does it come naturally to any man, when once he is master of scriptural doctrine, to manage a parochial school, to organize parochial visiting, to catechize the young, to visit the sick, or to prepare and to preach sermons? It may be so with some few men. There may be those who are gifted with these great aptitudes, and whom a special training in these matters would rather cramp than aid. But surely this is not a common, certainly it is not the normal, condition of a candidate

for Holy Orders. Certainly it is not the course pursued by a student of law, or tolerated in a student of medicine. To expect it in this one instance is to expect a miracle. To act upon this expectation is to hand over one Parish after another to be experimented on by an untaught empiric, and to prevent one clergyman after another from ever rising out of the awkwardnesses of a perpetual beginner, or (at best) the eccentricities and mannerisms of a self-instructed genius. Surely these are powers best and most safely acquired in the observation of their exercise. And where is the experienced Pastor who would not gladly take under his general direction, from time to time, three or four candidates for Holy Orders? Great joy would it carry to the heart of one parochial clergyman—for him I can answer—to receive applications of such a nature; to find that there were men of blameless character, of steady purpose, of open mind, and of true devotion, who were willing to take up their abode in his Parish, before Ordination, to see what he could show them, and to render to him such services, in his schools and amongst his poor, as church order may permit and mutual convenience arrange. Then and not till then would he feel that his Parish was efficiently worked, and he would cherish the hope that what was thus given to him would be repaid in some measure by opportunities of widening experience, and growing in the knowledge alike of man and of God.

I can make no apology for having used this last opportunity of addressing you, my beloved brethren, in bringing before you a subject which lies very near my heart. I long to see that reproach rolled away, which is said to rest at this time upon the Church of England,

that she is not giving in any large proportion her most distinguished sons to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. I know that in this place she has given many of them: forgive me if in ignorance I seem to disparage their numbers. But how is it with the younger generation here present before me? Are there no stronger inducements drawing a large proportion of you elsewhere? Are there none, whose talents, whose characters, whose antecedent purposes, seem to destine them for the ministry, yet who, for some reason or (might I say) for no reason, are now looking off from it and shaping for themselves a widely different career? Are there none who might almost say, 'Thy vows are upon me, O Lord'—so profound was the desire of a mother's heart, so earnest once their own resolution, to seek this and no other calling—yet who now have erased from their brow that sacred mark, and would fain be anything else rather? My brethren, why is this? I ask it of you seriously, anxiously, affectionately, what has influenced, what has changed you? Is it anything in the Articles or formularies of the national Church, which suggests to you some scruple? I cannot counsel you to go against your conscience in the smallest matter: but I would ask, what pains have you taken to get satisfaction upon this point? Have you taken counsel with elder men, men of thought, of piety, of experience? Remember, though you must not profess that which you do not think, yet, on the other hand, there is a call on the positive side as well as the negative; a call to adhere to the work which God had seemed to mark out for you, unless the scruple which has occurred to you be as rational as it may be fanciful, as important as it may be trifling, and as perma-

nent as it may be transitory. Or is it that you dread to incur that yoke of bondage which is sometimes laid too heavily upon the clerical by the lay members of our common Church? Is it that you dread to be taunted at some future day with insincerity if you should ever dare to think or to speak with freedom; to find yourself made an offender for a word, and called untrue to your profession if you cannot utter every passing Shibboleth of a conventional theology? We cannot, alas, promise you an exemption from the common lot of all men: nor can we indeed encourage you in the flattering notion that subscription binds you to nothing, or that a man may be a clergyman of the Church and yet teach Universalism, Deism, Pantheism, or what he will. But this we will say to you, Act now upon your present honest convictions, and trust God with the opinions as with the fortunes of your future. Dread not the irrevocability of the pastoral vow, if only your conscience now tells you that Jesus Christ is, and is Lord both of the dead and living. It may be formidable in prospect to undertake a responsibility absolutely life-long: but each day that you live you will less and less wish to evade it, if only God gives you grace so to live as you will wish that you had done when you lie down to die. 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God:' then look not back. Day by day, if you faint not, you will rejoice more and more in the choice once made: 'and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.'

And here, my brethren, I would have ended: but I receive, even as I write, a touching intimation of yet one

other, perhaps a humbler, hindrance which sometimes besets the entrance upon clerical life. There are those present amongst you, who can scarcely struggle on through the pecuniary difficulties of an education for Holy Orders. In one case made known to me, though I vouch not for exact details, twelve years have been spent in efforts, frustrated again and again by poverty alone, to gain an entrance into the ministry of the Church. A single Term yet remains—one only—and the goal is reached. But, alas, the means to reside through that one Term are not to be found, and here, on the very eve of attaining the long-cherished object, disappointment is to be again endured. Does not this fact read a solemn lesson to some who are squandering, perhaps, at this time, in idle or luxurious living, wealth which might have comforted this brother's heart, and added a faithful minister to the Church which Christ purchased with His own blood? If any one's heart is touched by the thought thus suggested, let him carry the lesson into his own life. Why should not some of those who hear me give of their abundance, privately and unostentatiously, in aid of their fellow-students who are in need? Could any proof of sincerity, could any exercise of practical self-denial, be more valuable than this? It will indeed be twice blessed. It shall bless him that receives, and it shall bless with a double blessing him who gives. You will not lack a safe and certain channel for the distribution of such bounty to your brethren: let it be dispensed through those who here fill a parent's place both towards you and them. Gladly will they—I well know it—aid you in any such work of charity. But O, my brethren, I would seek yet more, as the Apostle says, you than

yours, and urge you to let the thought thus presented to you of another's estimate of this high calling, of another's zeal and toil and patience in the struggle to attain it, enhance your own appreciation of this ministry, and quicken your own energies in ensuing it. And may God Himself pour out largely of His blessing upon this place, that it may be indeed fruitful in souls devoted to His love, and in lives dedicated to His service.

III.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

St Matthew xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

WE have spoken of turning to Christ, and we have spoken of living to Christ. We have spoken of a vail interposed between us and Christ, and of a self which usurps a service due to Christ only.

But is there not a yet earlier question to be answered, before either of these acts can be done, before either of these obstacles can be removed? Who is this Person of whom we speak so confidently as the Light and the Life, as the Master and the Lord, of man? What think we, what know we, of Christ?

This is the question of questions, for every age, and for our own. Before this question every other fades and slinks away. Questions of genuineness and authenticity, questions of criticism and interpretation, the question (I say it without scruple) of inspiration itself, all these are as nothing in comparison of the question, asked once on earth of a company of scoffing Pharisees, asked now from heaven of a congregation of professed believers, 'What think ye of Christ?'

The Apostle Peter gives this charge to Christians generally—and surely it lies not less heavily upon a

commissioned instructor of Christians—'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' Are there not here present to-day some whose inmost hearts are asking of me a reason of the hope that is in them; a reason of the hope which still lingers within, though, like the remaining good in the Church of Sardis, it be indeed 'ready to die?' Yes, we live in days of great unsettlement, and objections which once came only from without the Church, from open enemies or self-styled free-thinkers, are urged now from within, in tones of grave earnestness or pathetic sadness, by men who fill the Christian ranks or even carry the Church's banner. And those whose minds are still ductile, gradually taking that impress which is in after years to stereotype itself into character, are solely perplexed and embarrassed in forming a decided opinion amidst this agitating strife of tongues. Too often they postpone that decision until a day shall come, which comes not, when a final judgment shall have been passed upon conflicting arguments. The time is gone by, the time is not come, for authoritative judgments. No earthly court now speaks so as to be 'an end of all strife:' when the heavenly court gives sentence, it will be too late; 'time will be no more;' the great 'night will have come when no man can work.' In the midst therefore of this restless, this unending debate, as to things true and false, things divine and human, we must act and we must suffer; judging, not infallibly, but with an honest and a patient judgment, each man for himself, upon assertions claiming his assent, and demands challenging his obedience. And we doubt not that He who has

here placed us, who has ordained that our lot should fall not upon a period of blind assent to traditional opinions, but upon a century of bold speculation and unbridled self-will, has both designed this for our trial, and will bless it to our final good.

A trial it is: let no man miscall it. And a trial which must be endured, not evaded. We cannot say to enquiry, 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no further: assail my outworks, but touch not my citadel.' We cannot say, 'I may at least assume thus much; I need not distress myself by discussing that; every science has its axioms and its postulates; the first axiom of my theology shall be the Divinity of Christ, and the first postulate of my theology shall be the authority of Scripture.' He who would be well 'instructed' in these days 'unto the kingdom of heaven' must have his reasons, be they ever so brief, even for these first elements of truth. And I know nothing more comforting, nothing more reassuring, in days of darkness, than to run over in the mind these reasons for believing. There was a time when it was the fashion to disparage evidences. A sermon on the proofs of Christianity would have been treated as at once chilling and superfluous. We have lived to judge differently. We want all our armour out again: every separate piece has its use: and we shall be well contented to be laughed at as old-fashioned, if we may but feel ourselves thoroughly equipped against 'all the fiery darts of the wicked one.'

It is in the humble hope of contributing something, however insignificant, to this work of comforting and of strengthening, that I stand to-day in this great congregation, and ask of them, 'What think ye of Christ?' Can

you tell me who He is, and what? Can you give me any good reason for believing that there is such a Person? 'He that cometh to Him must believe that He is:' if the heart would turn to the Lord, it must first be assured of His being; if a man would live to the Lord and die to the Lord, he must first be persuaded that that Lord exists, and that He is this in person and character, and not that. Blessed be God, enquiry need not be doubt: enquiry made, as St Peter says, 'with meekness and fear,' is the very opposite, the very antidote, of doubt: God gives us a reason for believing, and to enquire is but to explore and to ascertain it.

Now I am thinking to-day of a case which I know to be extremely common; a mind thoroughly confused and shaken as to the great verities of the Gospel. In some places I might almost fear the effect of this confession. It might be dangerous, as well as painful, to speak of such unsettlement as possible. But not here. Here you know how to be tender to such an experience. Those who read widely and think deeply, those whose office it is to guide or whose present business it is to form opinion, will not count it shocking, though they may sorrow over it, that in certain moods of mind or in certain stages of developement there should be a temporary break-down of all confidence in things most authoritatively taught, most ardently desired, or most deeply cherished. And men in that condition are oftentimes driven into silence. They can scarcely express their state without giving pain and without incurring misconception. Two friends may be passing through the same trial: they talk freely upon every other topic, but upon this they are silent. What would not either give for the sympathy of the

other? But no; he dare not give a whole confidence, and he will not give a half. He must struggle on, grope on, suffer on, all alone.

But there is just one person who ought to understand him, and from whom he ought to get help. The ministry of God's House, in one part of its office, that of preaching, is designed not only to build up the faithful, but also to soothe the fearful, and to reassure the doubter. Sometimes the preacher does well to pause in his exposition of truth or his enforcement of duty, and say, 'But there is one amongst you who cannot receive this saying, because he is distressed and shaken by a fundamental doubt; by an involuntary misgiving as to the very Person for whom his allegiance is thus confidently demanded. Let me talk to him from this place: his heart will open to me the more readily because he knows that I know him not: and yet, God helping me, I will read his heart to him, though his name is unknown to me.' And now what shall he say to him? how shall he assist him in laying again the first foundations? Need he be ashamed to stoop very low; to speak of things almost puerile in their elementariness? Not so, if he be as his Master. 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' Even so must we do; pointing to the seen, and passing through that to the unseen; starting from things earthly, and rising by a gradual progress towards things heavenly, things divine.

You are here, we might say to him, called by the name of Christ. A Christian is a follower of Christ. Christianity, the religion of Christ, is a fact in the world.

You yourself are a witness, by no choice of yours, to its existence, as a name and as a power, upon this solid earth. The Christian religion, like every other religion, had a Founder. Its very enemies tell us His name, His date, His country, His end. His very enemies tell us the rapid spread of His religion notwithstanding that discouraging, that ignominious beginning. You yourself are a proof of it. Eighteen centuries after that event you are here named after Him, addressing your worship through and to Him. All around you, you yourself, would take it as an affront were that appellation refused; were it said, You are no Christian. All the most solemn acts of your nation proceed upon the supposition that the nation is Christian; in other words, that Christianity is true. These things are facts. What then? do they prove conclusively that the religion is true? have there been, are there, no false religions claiming and receiving the obedience of nations? What do we say then? We say that the fact, the accident if you will, of your being by race and name a Christian, makes it imperative upon you, as an act of reason, to inform yourself, to come to some individual judgment, as to Him whose name you bear. Am I safe in trusting to Him for access to God, for pardon of sin, for support in death, for eternal life? Who is this Jesus, by whose name I am named, and in whose strength pious men in this country live and die?

If I would know anything of one of the great men of the past, I must read his history. If there exists a biography of him; still more, a contemporary or nearly contemporary biography of him; I study it with deep attention. If there be more than one such record, I read each, and I compare them one with another. If this comparison

discloses some contrarieties, it becomes a matter of profound interest to adjust the balance of testimony, and to harmonize as I may the seeming discord. Such varieties there are in all histories, in all biographies. And the more, in proportion to the eminence of the person and the excitement of the scenes in which he moved. The memoirs of the first French Revolution are full of these discrepancies. In many matters of detail you cannot arrive at certainty, because you cannot reconcile conflicting evidence, as to the real lives or real deaths of the unhappy sovereigns and princes who figure in that disastrous tale. But does any one infer from this confusion that there were no such persons, or that their general character and history is unknown to us? The very interest felt by the writer in the events described, the excitement and agitation and anguish connected with the sight of insults and cruelties and tortures inflicted upon those whom he loved and honoured and revered, has a tendency to blur the distinctness or even to impair the correctness of his recollection of minor details: insomuch that two eye-witnesses of the same occurrence will describe it with considerable discrepancies; and yet each with the most truthful intention, and each with a generally faithful effect. You see this not in books only, but in oral accounts of transactions just ended. And much as you regret the difficulty, in some cases the impossibility, of arriving at exact accuracy in the knowledge of every small detail, you would be thought, and justly thought, not unreasonable only but insane, if you made this a plea for doubting the main fact in question, or disputing the general aspect of the characters and agents involved.

Apply the same principle to the biographies which you possess of Jesus Christ. They are four in number. We do not assume at this stage of our enquiry either a divine inspiration of these Books, or an entire exemption from the ordinary risks of error. I will read the life of Christ as I read any other life. I will form my first idea of Him as I would form my first idea of any personage of history. I will allow as much as any one asks of me for discrepancies and contrarieties amongst these biographies. I will narrow my ground until I have given nothing more to this record—in which nevertheless every hope of my soul is bound up—than I give every day to the narratives of the present or the histories of the past. Only I will refuse to give less to it. I will refuse to apply to the Gospels a principle which it would be madness to apply to any other evidence or to any other record. Nothing is oftentimes so irrational as rationalism, and nothing so credulous as incredulity. It is not to be endured—it is not to be accounted for on any supposition save one—that scepticism should dogmatize upon our faith as it could not do without madness upon any other matter either of fact or opinion, and despoil us of the very hope that is in us by rules which in any other application would be preposterous if not ludicrous.

Take into your hand one of these four biographies of Jesus Christ. Come afresh, as far as possible, to the contemplation. Put yourself, as far as possible, out of the light of previous faith and previous knowledge. If I had this only, what should I think of Christ? Stand in the first place at some distance from the picture: lose its separate lines, and view it only in its effect. If this were all I knew, what should I think of Christ?

1. I am struck first of all by His conformity with the name by which He commonly described Himself, that of 'the Son of Man.' I am struck, in every sense, by His humanity. Such a Man, such a real Man, in every sense; so manly, so manful, so humane, so human. Such a strength, such a tenderness, such help, such sympathy, such power, such love. So I run on; and I love to do so, because I am persuaded that it is in such general reflections as these that the foundation of faith is laid. We must begin with the Son of Man, before we can hope to end with the Son of God. 'What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?' We must speak of Him as David's Son, before we can rise to the contemplation of Him as David's Lord.

Let me draw out this first conception into a few particulars. I am perplexed where to begin: let me begin anywhere; it matters not.

(1) What a force of will. Who ever said of Him that He was not firm, first of all, with Himself? Who ever pretended to say that He was not holy, self-governed, His own master, resolute to deny Himself that which was wrong, absolute in His refusal ever to indulge Himself to the neglect of duty, perfect in His control over the power of temptation? Stand forth, ye His enemies, and cast a stone, if you can, at the spotlessness of His character.

(2) What a perfect sincerity. When did He ever stoop to the language of complaisance or flattery? In what instance did He ever call a word or an act by a false name? How boldly did He rebuke vice. If I might say it (and you know that I do say it) with entire reverence, what an example was He of our English

virtues. That perfect straightforwardness, that freedom from artifice and from finesse, that directness of purpose, and that plainness of speech—O let us not fail to recognize in Him who is called in prophetic language 'the Desire of all nations,' the desire, the satisfaction, the resting-place, of this.

(3) Yet, on the other hand, what a tenderness of feeling, what a gentleness of spirit. It is not often that strength and sweetness meet in one person: when they do meet, the union, even the imperfect union such as we see it sometimes in man, is irresistibly attractive. But when were these two qualities ever so united as they were in Christ? The sight of suffering—of bodily suffering, of mental suffering, of spiritual suffering—touched Him to the quick. And yet His own life was a life of suffering made up of all these. He Himself hungered; no stone would He turn into bread for His own relief. But when He saw the multitudes distressed for food in a desert place, instantly He had compassion, and could not bear to let them depart without a bountiful, if it were even a miraculous supply. He was houseless and homeless; He was lonely in heart; He was falsely accused; He was scorned and taunted and maligned: all these things He received as His daily portion, and saw in them the very cup of sorrow which His Father gave for His drinking. But when He saw another's soul sad or suffering or sorrow-laden, the sympathy which He asked not for Himself was ever ready on His part for another.

(4) And thus we reach the unselfishness of His character. What a life of self-denial, of self-sacrifice, of self-forgetfulness, was His. What a long and weary

day was each one of the days of that life. From early morning till late evening He was ministering to others; teaching, healing, listening to sorrows and relieving them. opening heavenly things to the ignorant and the earthly-minded, and then turning to make earth itself less dreary to the care-worn and the broken-hearted. He never said to any one that He was too hungry or too weary or too sad at heart to attend to him and that instantly. On His way to the house of mourning He is thronged and pressed by conflicting applications. Never did He express impatience of any importunity: never did He ask a moment's respite from the oppressive monotony of supplication.

(5) And look, once again, at the humility of the character; the absence of all parade and all display in its benevolence. Many men and many women, living a life of devoted charity, have been the heralds of their own virtues: with whatever professions of humility, they have taken pains to let others hear of their deeds: sometimes they have been visibly elated by their own triumphs, and have shown a sensitiveness to reproof or disparagement contrasting somewhat painfully with loud professions of self-knowledge and of self-abasement. How unlike in all this to Him whose servants they call themselves. Those repeated charges to the subjects of His marvellous cures, that they should not make Him known; that habit of withdrawing Himself from admiring crowds and refusing popular demonstrations; that description of Him, in the words of prophecy, by an eye-witness of His ministry, 'He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets;' do not these things add a yet further mark of perfection to that un-

exampled character, and crown with a distinctive glory the person of this Son of Man?

(6) And then we pass to the elevation of Christ's character. What a superiority we see in Him to all the infirmities and to all the littlenesses of human nature. How did He rise above all considerations of earthly position and advantage. What an indifference did He show to the inconveniences and to the slights of poverty. With what a majesty of conscious independence did He confront the arrogance alike of temporal and of spiritual authority: giving honour where honour was due: but asserting for Himself that freedom of speech and of will, which is the attribute and birthright of man. How did He dignify and ennoble the state of the poor, and equalize (in the only just sense) all ranks and conditions of men in reference to the two chief tribunals, of God and of conscience. And how did He show in His own example the perfect compatibility of this moral and spiritual equality with the most entire obedience to law and the most becoming respect for station and office. For this reason, it may be, amongst others, He chose for Himself upon earth the condition of the working man and of the poor, that He might show forth at once the duty and the dignity of that largest class of mankind; its duty in obedience, its dignity in free-will; its duty in observing order and in paying respect to power, its dignity in being inwardly, in heart and in soul, not the servant of man but of God only.

(7) And this elevation of character was maintained even in Him, instrumentally, by devotion. His days were given to charity, His nights to prayer. Soon will that grace decay which is not fed by communion with

God. Soon will a life of benevolence become a mere routine; soon will living for others become the death of the soul; soon will independence degenerate into waywardness, and elevation of character into exaltation of self; unless time be found or made for self-recollection, self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Of Jesus we read sometimes that 'He went out into a mountain alone, and continued all night in prayer to God.' Sometimes that 'He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.' Sometimes that, after a long and busy day of charity, 'He rose up in the morning a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' Such was, humanly speaking —and it is in that aspect that we are now contemplating Him—the secret of His life. Thus it was that He lived above the world while still in it, and continued to be (as it is written) 'the Son of God in heaven,' even while He was also 'the Son of man who came down from heaven.' And we see in all this, not only an example for our imitation, but also—which is our present subject—matter for our admiration and for our reverence. There is that in us, even by nature, which does reverence devotion, if we can be quite sure that it is separated from hypocrisy. Our own hearts, fallen though they be from an original righteousness, or tampered with though they may have been by the arts of unbelief and sin, do recognize in a life of secret communion with God a mystery which they adore, as well as a power which they acknowledge; and then only regard with entire approval a life of active beneficence, when they can believe it to be set in motion by a spring of divine mechanism, and kept in motion

by a repeated application of the power in which it originated.

(8) And where there is a combination (where else indeed but here shall we find it?) of all the several elements which have been enumerated; strength and tenderness, sincerity and gentleness, unselfishness and humility, elevation of character and devotion of spirit; there we are prepared to contemplate with unmixed admiration the exhibition, in the last place, of an exhaustless patience. In some cases patience is no virtue. There is a patience which has degenerated into tameness, into timidity, into an absence of feeling, or a servitude of the will. There is a patience which submits where it ought to resist, and would rather dishonour God than affront man. But this is where there has been an absence of other qualities essential to the true perfection of the human character. This is where independence and elevation and self-control and devotion, force of will and magnificence of heroism, have not been present but absent. If there have been these also, then indeed patience, the steady unflinching resolute endurance of pain and anguish in the cause of right, becomes, men themselves being the judges, a virtue and the very crown of virtues. Thus it is that the heart of man has ever been touched by the thought of the sufferings of Christ. We are not speaking yet of what we deeply and earnestly believe to have been the chief use, the glorious effect, of these sufferings; we are speaking of the character which shone forth in them. And we do not believe that any device or any sophistry of the unbeliever will ever make a man's heart proof against the thought of the patience of

Jesus. The record of those last scenes of His earthly life; of His latest conversation with His disciples, of His agony in the garden, of His betrayal, His desertion, His long examinations before the chief priest, before Pontius Pilate, before king Herod, of His invincible silence under false accusation, of His meek endurance of unjust contempt, of shameful scourging and insolent spitting, of the pain and the weariness and the thirst and the faintness and the protracted torture of crucifixion, of His prayer for His enemies, of His thought for His desolate mother, of His final commendation of His departing spirit to that heavenly Father who yet seemed to Him, in the darkness of the hour, to have forsaken and forgotten Him; will make itself felt, I believe, whenever it is heard by the ear of man; will certainly, at particular moments (and those the most critical moments) of human life, be turned to as the chief, the only stay; will conquer from age to age, as it has conquered in the past eighteen centuries, the stubbornness of the will and the alienation of the heart from God, and make good over and over again the well-known words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'

2. And thus we should pass, in this rapid survey, from the character to the doctrine, from the holiness of the Man to the wisdom of the Teacher. Take one single Gospel; take but one single chapter of that one Gospel; let your eye rest separately upon each utterance

which it ascribes to Jesus; reflect, as you read, upon the acknowledged humility of His earthly origin; ask yourself over and over again the old question of His enemies, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? From whence hath this man this wisdom?' mark His spiritual insight into duty; how He carries the holy law into the heart of man; how He sets conscience to work upon the demands of God; how He brings every feeling to the test of practice, 'Ye shall know it by its fruits;' how He calls us to decision, to consistency, to unity within, and to forbearance and peace and charity without; how He urges entire confidence in God's power and goodness and mercy, and assures us that what we ask shall be done for us; how He unmasks our latent duplicities, and bids us beware of hypocrisy as of the one thing which 'He cannot away with;' how He calls to Himself the anxious and the doubting and the ignorant and the sin-laden, and offers to every man according to his need rest in Him; how He pities the difficulties, inward and outward, of the struggling, the tempted, the half-believing soul, and offers to each the very balm, the very healing, to each one most appropriate; how He sounds the very depths of our being, and brings out of an inexhaustible storehouse just those thoughts and those promises which we feel, could we but grasp them, would rectify every distortion, and make up every breach, and satisfy every longing and every yearning of our wandering and storm-tossed souls.

And as I read on and ponder the words such as 'never man spake,' I discover in them a claim and a self-assertion which would be irreconcilable with His already known character if it were not strictly true. I

linger upon words which tell of Him from His own lips as giving His own life 'a ransom for many,' His own flesh 'for the life of the world,' His own body uplifted on the Cross 'to draw all men unto Him.' I hear Him saying that it is the will of God Himself 'that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father,' that the Father 'has committed to the Son all judgment,' and that the voice of the Son is that resistless sound which shall summon forth the dead to 'a resurrection of life' or else 'a resurrection of judgment.' At last the whole of this marvellous disclosure is summed up in the one single utterance, 'I and my Father are one.' I should start back in horror from such declarations, if they proceeded from any mouth save this alone. But here I find myself listening without repugnance, and receiving without the will to contradict. By degrees the voice of the Speaker has so penetrated my soul, that I am persuaded He could not speak in error, and would not speak in blasphemy. One so humble, so retiring, so self-forgetting; One whose very voice no man ever heard in the streets; would not claim for Himself the power to atone for human sin or to sit in judgment upon human destiny, would not claim for Himself, above all, coeternity and coequality and absolute oneness with God, unless the very truth itself prompted the utterance, and made it impossible that the claim should be withheld.

Yes, my brethren, the doctrine of Jesus is the very complement of His character; and he who has first been drawn towards Him as the Son of Man begins to find, as he reads on, that there is something here beyond 'the manner of man;' the breath of God is on His lips, as the fragrance of heaven was about His steps.

3. Such was He in goodness, such in wisdom: and is there not yet a third part of God's attesting seal; I say not the greatest—it is not given us to compare infinites—I say not the most beautiful or the most attractive; but yet a part, and (let men speak as they will) an essential part, of the testimony which can alone prove a Revelation; the seal of power? I put this last, not first. Power alone, viewed in its exercise below, is an ambiguous test: there may be, we learn it from Scripture, an imitation, a successful imitation, of God's power; and there may be a counterworking, not without results, of God's power, by God's enemy. We hear in our own days marvellous tales of power; power exercised over human frames by human hands or human wills; power over lifeless matter, power over departed souls. We just hear these things, and wonder: we neither believe them nor disbelieve: they do not at present fit in either into our philosophy or into our religion. But this we can see, and see already; that these wonders, even if they rose into miracles, lack the distinctive mark of that which we so designate in the Gospels: these things are not the seal of God set to anything; they are entirely dissociated both from wisdom and goodness; they come not to attest a revelation; they are strange isolated phenomena, and there they end. But when Jesus Christ wrought one of His miracles; when He calmed the raging storm, or cast out from a tortured soul its possessing devil; He did it as one who had a mission from God to man, as one who had already proved that mission by the two other, the two infallible tokens, of a divine goodness and a divine wisdom. From Him a miracle was not a wonder only

but a sign; a sign which pointed to something; even to the source of His mission, its motive, its character, and its end. And when I see what He was in wisdom, and when I see what He was in goodness; when I hear what He came for, and when I behold what He has accomplished; I do not wonder that He manifested also an almighty power: rather should I have wondered if He had lacked, or failed to use, that third credential: His miracles, to my mind, need no evidence but the very commonest and most simple; they hang together and are of a piece with all the rest: what would have been incredible in another is natural in Him; inasmuch as it was to be expected that He whom I have already seen to have God's wisdom and whom I have already seen to have God's goodness with Him should have with Him also, and for the selfsame purpose, God's almighty strength.

And as I witness that strength exercised in life; exercised in every conceivable department of nature and of human circumstance; exercised upon the winds and waves, exercised upon the food that supports and upon the disease which undermines life; exercised upon the soul 'which Satan has bound' and upon the body which has even 'seen corruption;' so I perceive that over that superhuman strength death itself, His own death, has no final, no continued control: I find that, as in life He had ever refused every sign but one to an evil and faithless generation, and that one the resurrection of His own body—a temple He called it—within three days and nights from His dissolution; so after death He was able to make good that promise, to fulfil that sign, to 'show Himself alive after His passion' to witnesses the most

competent, not as a disembodied spirit, but as a man complete in both parts of His nature, and yet invested with a glory not of this world, and made ready for a return into those heavenly places from which He declared Himself to have first descended. All this which I could not have believed of another I find conceivable and credible in Him. I have learned by this time to judge of Him as possessed of a character more than human, a nature absolutely divine. And therefore as I rise from point to point in the long series of His acts and words below, I seem to have reached naturally and without astonishment this crowning miracle of the Resurrection. I add it to His evidences without sense of discord or of contrariety. And when I am asked at length, 'What thinkest thou of Christ? whose Son is He?' I can answer with an unhesitating confidence, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'

'What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?' Till that question is answered in each one of us, there is no rest and no strength for any man. If we set out in the race of life without answering it, we are the sport of every passing wind, in the deepest interests and the highest destinies of our being. Every word breathed against the authority of a divine revelation or the reality of a divine inspiration is enough to topple down the whole fabric of a traditional faith, and to destroy the sand-built habitation of a conventional hope. Happy is the man who has so assured himself, by God's grace, of the mission, the truth, and the Divinity of his Saviour, that he can consider every other question, whether of opinion or practice, under His guidance, in His presence. Then, if he has anything to modify, by later

experience or deeper reflection, in his first ideas of theology, whether in regard to the relation of Scripture to science, or of the human to the divine element in inspiration, he does so under Christ's direction, and is a believer and a Christian still. Perhaps, if he looks more closely into the matter, he will find that what is supposed adverse to the Bible is in reality in perfect harmony with it, and will eventually turn to it for a testimony. He will not be forward to surrender without reason, but neither will he be perverse in retaining against reason, any supposed outwork of the truth he loves. His faith in Christ Himself, the result first of enquiry, and then secondly of intercourse—of carefully noting the evidences of the Gospel, and then of daily communing with the Saviour whom the Gospel reveals—is built upon a 'rock that is' indeed 'higher than he,' at whose feet the storms of controversy may spend themselves, but upon whose head, through all time, the 'eternal sunshine settles.' 'He knows in whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him against that day.' God grant us all, beloved brethren, this faith and this hope, in life and in death, for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

IV.

THE REMEDIAL DISCIPLINE OF DISEASE AND DEATH.

1 Corinthians xi. 30—32.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

EVERY school has its work and its discipline; it is so with the school of God.

We have spoken on two occasions of life's work: to-day (as the special occasion bids us) we are to speak a few plain words upon God's discipline.

And we choose for this purpose one of those unique texts of which we spoke at the outset of this brief course: a text embedded in a passage of undying interest, in reference to the most distinctive and the most sacred of Gospel ordinances, the holy Sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ; but itself too so marvellous in its disclosure of unexpected dealing —so solemn in its warning, and withal so bright with blessed hope—that it courts examination and rewards diligent study, if the presence (not unsought) of the inspiring Spirit be with us in the reading, the hearing, and the pondering.

The idolatry of antiquity is one of the many opposite dangers which beset the Church of all time. Just better, it may be, than the lust of innovation or the vanity of self-satisfaction, it is yet itself an error, and it may run on into a sin. It is an ingratitude to God for many present advantages, it is a disparagement of the guiding and developing hand of His Providence, it is almost a denial of the assurance of Christ, 'Lo, I am with you alway,' if we imagine (as many have done) that the Church sprang full-grown and perfect from the new birth of Pentecost, and degenerated from that original maturity in proportion as she advanced, by years or by centuries, from her nativity and her baptism. We learn a different lesson from the inspired page itself. It is not enough to show that a certain thing was believed in primitive Ephesus, or done in primitive Corinth, in order to prove that the one was true or the other right; that either the one or the other was according to the will of God, or a portion of the integral 'faith delivered once for all to the saints.'

The chapter now before us lifts the veil from one surprising feature of the Church of Corinth in Apostolical times.

If there be an institution guarded and fenced by a peculiar reverence, it is the ordinance of Holy Communion. Even to a fault it has been so. Men careless in life and unbelieving in opinion—utterly indifferent how they profaned or trifled with ought else in the Christian faith or worship—have yet shrunk, with a superstitious dread, from tampering with the Lord's Supper. To that one sacred memorial they have transferred all the reverence and all the scrupulosity which

ought to have been diffused over everything ordained by the word or consecrated by the touch of Christ. If only they abstained from defiling by a worldly or sinful contact that one last bequest of dying love, they thought it but a small thing to desecrate the ordinance of common prayer: nay, they thought it but a small thing to break the command through life, or to postpone the command till death, to 'do this,' to eat of the bread and drink of the cup, in remembrance of the Cross and Passion. It was no hypocrisy, they thought, to meet in the congregation for worship; no untruth to repeat creeds which for them meant nothing, or to join in Litanies which for them asked nothing; no profaneness to exchange smiles or whispers in the sanctuary, to turn sermons into ridicule, or to point their sarcasms and wing their jests with Scripture; provided only they regularly turned their backs upon the table spread for Communion, and stood aloof from that one single act to which they confined their whole idea of religious profession and ceremonial sanctity.

How far this feeling—predominant in the Church of England within the recollection of many, and not without a certain rough use in keeping consciences alive and the very idea of sanctity extant amongst men—may have been formed or fostered by the language (in some parts) of this very chapter, it is needless to enquire and unprofitable to know. But it is certainly remarkable that the one point on which the conscience of the 18th century was awake was a point on which the conscience of the first age (in some communities) was already dormant. Here was the Church of Corinth, in St Paul's own lifetime, desecrating the Lord's Supper by

disorder and intemperance. Associating with it in sign of brotherly Christian union a common meal—to be begun or closed by the celebration of the sacred rite of Communion itself—they made it first of all an opportunity of displaying the worst selfishnesses of class and the worst discords of party, and they ended by an exhibition of excess and intoxication, everywhere wretched and shameful, but here shocking too and horrible.

It is in the course of his reproof of this profanation that St Paul introduces the words of the text.

You must have forgotten, he says, the time and the object of the institution of this ordinance of Communion. You must have forgotten that the time was the night in which Christ our Lord was betrayed, and the object the commemoration of His death for sin. 'Take, eat,' He said: 'This is my body...This cup is the new testament in my blood...As often' therefore 'as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.' Judge ye whether this act can be done 'unworthily'—done, as he afterwards explains the words, with no discernment of the Lord's body, no perception of the difference between this and common bread, this and common wine—and no injury and no punishment follow. 'He that eateth and drinketh' (in this sense) 'unworthily, eateth and drinketh,' not indeed, as our Version gives it, 'damnation,' but still 'judgment,' and God's judgment, 'to himself, as not discerning (distinguishing) the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.' These are examples of the 'judgment' spoken of. For profaning thus the Lord's Supper, there had been amongst them special visitations of the divine displeasure, in

divers forms of weakness and sickness, nay (in some cases) even of premature death. And why, he asks, why these inflictions? For lack of a self-discipline which would have rendered needless the discipline of God. 'If we judged ourselves;' if we (more exactly) 'discerned' or 'discriminated' ourselves—it is the very word used above for 'discerning the body;' if we would but look into our own selves, exercising there that power of discrimination between right and wrong which God has given to all of us in conscience; if we would only sit in judgment ourselves within, entering, with a diligent introspection, into the state of heart and life, so that we might drag to the light of day our hidden obliquities, and with a resolute will cast them out of us and spare not; then 'we should not be judged:' taking into our own hands in this life the Judge's office, we should, with His gracious approval—let us say it with reverence—take it out of His: He who 'doth not willingly afflict' would see affliction to be needless, and suffer us to walk in the clear sunny day of a Father's reconciled countenance. 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' That judgment which we might avert, that judgment of God which a severe self-judgment might altogether have prevented and set aside, is yet, even when it falls, not a 'damnation:' rather is it a 'chastening that we should not be condemned;' a fatherly discipline exercised betimes in this life, that we may still be owned in the great day as among the 'washed and justified and sanctified;' the baptismal cross not obliterated, the seal of the Spirit

not erased. Pain and sickness, suffering and death itself, may be, in God's hand, a remedial discipline; the careless inconsistent Christian may even be 'delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh,' and yet all this may have in view an ulterior mercy; 'that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

The subject is not more interesting than it is instructive.

1. For, first of all, what does it say to us as to God's concern in individual lives and destinies?

We sometimes speak, and more often feel, as though a life mentioned in holy Scripture were made, by the very fact of that sacred contact—by its admission, I mean, in the manner of example or warning, to a place in the record of inspiration—of a wholly different order and kind from a life such as men live now; as though it must have had a value and an elevation and a grandeur more worthy of God's notice and of God's interest than the doings or the sufferings, the fortunes or the destinies, of a mere commonplace being like our own. I know that the fallacy vanishes in the stating: we see that it is an illusion, and yet to-morrow we shall feel it still. I desire to fasten upon our minds, while we can, this obvious yet ill-learnt lesson; the equality of all persons in God's regard: the absence, in His sight, of any such distinctions as those between great and small, sacred and common, Scripture characters and characters of common daily English life: and to draw from it this inference, so simple in sound yet so deep in its penetration, that there is not one person at this moment present, in these seats and these galleries, in the management of whose life, as a matter of indi-

vidual guidance and discipline, God Himself, 'the God of the spirits of all flesh,' is not as directly, as immediately interested as ever He was in the spiritual affairs of these men and women at Corinth, upon whom, His own Word tells us, He sent weakness and sickness and even death, to punish their sins and to save their souls. Yes, my friends, there was nothing peculiar in interest, and there was scarcely anything exceptional in treatment, in the cases of those Corinthians. These young lives, here making preparation for the work of time and for the solemn alternative of eternity, are just as precious, every one of them, in the regard of God, as though they had been brought into the Gospel covenant through the preaching of an Apostle, disciplined for heaven by a ministry of miracle, or placed on record in the Scripture page for the instruction and edification of latter days of the Church. I believe that the thoughtful amongst you, who mark the turnings of life and take heed to the signals of grace, could give—were the heart opened, as it is not to man, in frank confession—an account of God's dealings with you personally, in the few years already gone by, such as would satisfy you, if it convinced not others, of a hand guiding and guarding, a will purposing and ruling, yea a Spirit suggesting, striving, and influencing, as minutely as if you alone were its care, as really as if your ears could even hear the voice behind you, saying, 'This, this is the way: walk thou in it.'

'Whoso is wise will ponder these things: and he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.'

2. Again, I would beg you to notice the value here assigned to a position within the Church of Christ.

These Corinthians were full of faults, and the hand of God was upon them in punishment. For their sins 'many were weak and sickly among them, and many slept.' And yet, just because they were inside the Church, all this judgment was a chastening. Just because they were men who had listened to the Gospel call, and had come out from the mass of mankind to enter the Christian fellowship, and on the strength of that profession of faith had been subjected to the rite of initiation, and were now baptized men, partaking in Christian ordinances and submitting themselves to Christian teaching, they had 'hope in their end:' what they suffered, they suffered not as punishment only, but distinctively as discipline: if they even died under the rod of chastening, it was in the hope that they might not be condemned with the world. We need the thought, every one of us, not to make us careless, but to make us thankful. There is a difference—a real and radical difference—between the inside and the outside of that Church which is Christ's body. If we even wish it, we cannot obliterate that mark. 'That which cometh into your minds'—God forbid that it should come there—'shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen:' you cannot be as the heathen. Worse or better: better certainly in position: and what is that but saying, partakers of a heavenly calling which will not let you alone; possessors of a hope, and heirs of a heaven, which God the Holy Ghost *will* remind you of, and press upon you, and make a sting and a goad to you if you will not have it for your joy and your crown? Such is your condition. Redemption is yours, because the world is

redeemed: but Redemption is yours beyond this, because you have been baptized, and because you were thereby brought into that right and that ownership and that use of the divine relationship, which never again, save by open apostasy, can you be deprived of while life is in your body. And because you are thus within the Christian fellowship, therefore all that befalls you has in it at least the possibility and the peradventure of salvation. 'That you be not condemned with the world' is inscribed upon every disappointment, every bereavement, every sorrow, every cross; inscribed upon pain and sickness, inscribed upon desolation and death; till the day of grace be ended, and a God with whom there is no respect of persons must sit in judgment finally upon your soul.

Such is the reality, of which there are many counterfeits, of a Christian church-membership. It is not that it entitles you, faithless or believing, to a share of 'the inheritance of the saints in light:' but it is, that it sets you within the school and home of God; gives you the right to every promise, and the possession of every influence for good; places you within the sound of the inward teaching, and makes every incident, joyful or adverse, of earthly existence, a positive intentional discipline of divine love.

'He therefore that despiseth despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit.'

3. Thirdly, and in particular, the text assigns a tender and merciful character to the graver and more penal exercises of the divine government over human lives. Pain is one of God's ministers—death itself may

be one of God's ministers—for the salvation of His Church from the condemnation of the world.

(1) That intermixture of loss and gain, of grief and joy, of injury and reparation, which pervades human life, has its exact counterpart in the Book of God.

Fallen man had to gather his one hope out of the words of a curse. 'It shall bruise thy head' was communicated for man's comfort in the same breath which said to the serpent, 'And thou shalt bruise his heel.' And when that hope reached its fulfilment in the cross of Jesus Christ, then was it seen that the two things, the curse and the blessing, were to be completed and consummated together: in the very wounding of man's heel was to be accomplished the crushing of the serpent's head. Even so has it been in all the minor fulfilments, before and since, of that comprehensive prophecy. In the suffering has lain the healing. Out of pain has sprung health, out of sorrow joy, and out of death life. Pain, sorrow, death, each in its turn has been God's minister to His Church for good.

We have seen this exemplified in a thousand ways.

The indirect benefits of pain are many. We owe to pain the existence of whole departments of salutary ministration. The office of the Christian nurse, the office of the Christian physician, a large part of the office of the Christian clergyman, is the creature of pain. Such institutions as that for which I ask your help to-day—institutions in which a self-denying charity ministers day by day to suffering man—owe their existence to pain. Every private home becomes in its turn a hospital: pain enters, and with it a new influx of love, a new effort of self-forgetfulness, and a new strength of unity. The

Lord Jesus Christ Himself would have ministered upon earth in vain, if there had been no suffering hearts to claim His sympathy, and no diseased bodies to feel His power.

We have called these the indirect benefits of pain. It exercises virtues in man, it called forth graces from the Saviour, which, but for it, must have lain dormant.

Not less evident are the more direct uses of suffering; those of which the Apostle wrote, 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you—chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world.'

The first effect of pain is reality. Nothing so brings a man to himself. The vain man, the conceited man, the affected man, the incessant jester, the actor of a part, the wearer of a mask, the assumer of a character—let sharp pain come upon him—becomes natural instantly. You see him then, he sees himself then, as he is. The habit of years drops off from him in a moment: the touch of pain has stripped him bare, and he lies open before God and man in the secret strength or weakness of reality and truth.

And the second effect of pain is humility. Not that poor feigned thing which men in health call humility: the general confession, 'I am a sinner,' with its usual gloss, when it is hard pressed, 'We are all sinners:' not this: but that humility which springs out of a momentary glimpse of God; that humility which is impressed upon me by the giant grasp of one who is evidently stronger than I; by the conviction, wrung from me by suffering, that I can no more will away or charm away this consciousness of agony than I can say to the sun, 'Stand thou still,' or to the ocean, 'Thus far shalt thou

come, and no farther.' The truth of my own helplessness is forced upon me at last, and with it the reality of the divine strength.

And then out of this springs oftentimes, under God's influence, a third thing, which is called in holy Scripture a seeking and feeling after God. If I am absolutely at the mercy of One who is stronger than I—of One in comparison with whom 'I am a worm and no man'—were it not well that I should enquire, 'Who is He, and what? Has He who is thus strong over me any will concerning me? Does it concern Him that I should be this or this? that I should feel thus or thus towards Him? that I should live this life or that life? that I should desire and seek and do whether this or that?'

And so, if the Word of God, or one rightly instructed in it, be at hand at this moment to guide, there will oftentimes arise out of pain (under grace) a fourth consequence: a humble listening to the voice which speaks from heaven; a reverent attention to the call to penitence; a serious pondering of the past steps in evil; a bitter sorrow for that which has displeased God; a thankful acceptance of the offer of mercy which is in Christ Jesus; and a resolute setting out, afresh or for the first time, in the way of Gospel holiness and of the divine life.

These things have we seen: the history of the ministry is full of them: and as often as they are seen, they illustrate again the saying of St Paul, 'Many are weak and sickly among you'—on purpose 'that they should not be condemned with the world.'

These things may arise in the common course of God's Providence, when suffering overtakes the careless, and the alacrity of perfect health and spirits is ex-

changed, more or less gradually, for the couch of pining sickness.

Or they may arise more exactly in the manner here indicated by St Paul; when God is pleased to send some definite sickness as the scourge of some definite sin, and to let pain follow upon transgression as its appropriate penalty and retribution.

And no doubt, if our eyes were opened, like the eyes of the prophet's servant in Dothan, to see the mountain of life full of those chariots and horses of fire which are the signals of God's active presence, we should perceive, oftener than now, some connection of cause and effect, certainly of provocation and retribution, in the distresses and diseases of our mortal being: we should know that in deed and in truth God is still living and moving in human life as the judge and the avenger; stopping one here, and one there, in the career of hidden ungodliness, and making Nature herself His executioner in the appointment to each of some righteous recompense of punishment. We should perceive that, in our own case at least, God has not left us even for a lifetime to ourselves, but has interposed the arm of His chastisement—secretly to all but one person—because He saw us walking in some way that was not good, and because nevertheless 'He loved us, and would do us good at our latter end.'

(2) But there stands behind this a word yet more remarkable, which tells us that for the same cause, and with the same purpose of mercy, 'many even sleep.' In short, not pain only, but death itself, may be a minister of God for good.

I know nothing, in the whole compass of Scripture,

at once more marvellous and more reconciling than this.

We read, I think, the Old Testament records of judgment, with a sort of tacit preconception that, when God slew, He also condemned. Many have been the half-suppressed feelings of inward dissatisfaction, with which men have studied the fate, for example, of the disobedient prophet. Nature said within them that the sin of the deceived man, who believed his brother-prophet's lying utterance when he ought to have clung tenaciously to God's earlier and unrevoked charge to himself, was less after all than the sin of the deceiver, who destroyed him by his lie, and then went to cry over him, 'Alas, my brother!' And yet the one is ruthlessly seized by the executioner of vengeance, and the other lives out all his days, and goes, respected and honoured, to the sepulchre of his fathers. Cast back, Christian friends, upon all such records the light of the revelation before us. If this man was what we make him—faithful in the main tenor, deceived in the special instance—be sure that the Judge of all the earth certainly did right, and remember St Paul's saying, 'Many are weak and sickly among you—yea, many even sleep—chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned.'

And many have been the illustrations of the same saying, afforded to us both in the history of nations and in the records of personal experience. When we are tempted to ask, 'Why should the sins of a whole dynasty of wicked French Kings be visited with unexampled severity on the last and best?' might we not let in the light of eternity upon the dark and piteous scene, and answer, 'Peradventure because God was

pleased thus to correct a frivolity and a self-indulgence which imperilled the soul, and gave the mind to distress, and the body to the executioner's axe, for the very reason assigned by St Paul, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus?'

Who can doubt that the same discipline, severe but gracious, has been exercised on a less august stage in a thousand times ten thousand instances? How often has the confession been heard on a penitent's deathbed, 'I desire not prolonged life: I feel myself weak to resist temptation: I had rather, if it please God, be taken away now from evil to come.' And how often has that prayer been answered. How often has the trembling cry for mercy, the evident sign and token of repentance, the earnest trust in Jesus, and the longing desire for the heavenly presence, been all that was vouchsafed in evidence of the reality of a conversion. It has pleased God, in tender compassion, that the sincere resolution should never be put to the proof; that the dying sorrow for sin, and the dying trust in the Saviour, should be left as the only testimony to the sinner's earnestness of repentance. And shall we coldly look on, in such a case, and say, 'I have no faith in deathbed conversions: I have no proof that, if that dying man had lived, he might not have returned to his sin and died therein?' No—but have you no faith yourself in the wisdom and lovingkindness of your God? no confidence that He, who doeth all things well, judged better herein than you, and perhaps was thus fulfilling the very word written here in the text, 'For this cause many sleep—that they should not be condemned with the world?'

God's thoughts are not our thoughts. His mercy is ampler than our puny measurements can compass. I believe, if it were only on the strength of this record, that there is a remedial agency in sickness, a remedial efficacy (under God) oftentimes in death, which largely augments the number of the heirs of salvation, and replenishes the 'great multitude which no man can number' with recruits of whom earth knows not, and whose names only the opening of the book of life shall reveal. To these, how many soever they be, shall belong the mysterious joy of those words of the apostle Peter, 'That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.'

4. The lessons of the text are yet far from exhausted: and one at least must be added, upon the instrumentality here ascribed to the body in furthering the purposes of God's mercy concerning the soul.

The experience of most of those who hear me bears hard, I doubt not, on the body. They have found it the constant drag upon duty, and the perpetual inlet of temptation. No sin can be committed save through the body: more than this, almost every sin is not only acted but conceived through some suggestion of the organs of sense. Therefore it is no wonder if their estimate of the body is both low and unfriendly. The Christian man owes the body a grudge for what he is. Some Christian men have deliberately set themselves to weaken it by austerities. They have thought their spiritual wellbeing to be exactly proportional to the humiliation and attenuation of the body. We cannot wonder, we can scarcely blame: and yet we think that holy Scripture teaches us a better discipline and a more excellent way.

(1) For first of all it reminds us of the glorious prospect opened before us, in which the body, revived and reconstructed, shall be an essential part of the redeemed and rescued man. Instead of bidding us look forward to the 'unclothing,' it bids us direct all our anticipations to the wondrous reinvestiture and 'clothing upon.' 'The hope of Israel' is, not death, but resurrection. The soul disembodied may repose and recruit itself from the toils and wounds of its earthly travail and conflict; may bathe itself in the water of life, and bask awhile, for refreshment and revival, in the sunshine of a Saviour's smile. But the soul disembodied—if we rightly read the inspired sayings—cannot yet recommence its work for God: capable of contemplation, capable of praise, capable of adoration, it is incapable still of ministration: not till the spiritual body, incorruptible and glorious, is added to the soul in Resurrection, can that work begin—be it what it may—in which eternity is to be spent; that work in which man, complete in both his parts, shall emulate the angelic activity; like the angels, 'excelling in strength;' doing (not as now) God's commandment, hearkening (as never before) to the voice of God's words.

Now therefore this body, which has in it the seed and germ of such an immortality, must be looked upon with reverence and treated with honour. 'Know ye not,' St Paul asks, 'that your body is' already, is now, 'the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? wherefore glorify God in your body.' Let every man 'know how to possess himself of his vessel' now 'in sanctification and honour.' Resurrection casts its

shadow before, and asserts for the body of humiliation some share of that respect which belongs of right to the body of glory.

This is one half of the revelation of God concerning man's body.

(2) The other half of that revelation is here. This body, this inlet and medium, too often, of temptation, is also in God's hand the instrument of a fatherly discipline. That discipline, as far as it is penal, is God's, not yours. You are to keep your body in temperance, sometimes even by the help of special acts of a necessary and religious self-denial, that it may do the soul's work and prove itself the Spirit's temple. This you must do: but you are not to undertake God's office, or presume to punish yourself through the body. Leave that work, so far as it shall be needful, to God alone. He, if and as He sees it to be needful for you, will chasten and discipline you through the machinery of the body. If pain comes, see God's hand in it. Connect it, if there be cause to do so, with some definite sin: even then accept it with a thankful sorrow. If there be no such cause revealed to you by a diligent self-scrutiny, then connect pain with general sinfulness; with the inheritance of a fallen nature, too surely acting itself, day by day, in thoughts and words and deeds of at least an unwilling infirmity. Accept it in this form with humility and thankfulness: feel that you deserve it, feel that you need it, see its gracious object, pray that it may bring you to the desired end. And even so, when death is in sight, think then of the words, 'Many even sleep—judged and chastened, that they be not

condemned:' into God's hand commend your expiring soul, and, if He hide Himself with the cloud, call Him, even as Christ did, your Father still.

5. My friends—and more especially I would speak now to my younger brethren—it may be that the subject which has engaged our latest thoughts has appeared to some of you wanting in appropriateness and application. You are here not in pain, not in sickness, with no sign or token of approaching death: why speak to you of these solemn matters, which seem at present to be so far removed from your thought and vision? I will tell you why I speak of them. Not though, but because, they are so far removed from your thought and vision. I would have them press upon you in all their strangeness; in the fulness of their contrast and contrariety to the life which is yours now. I can conceive few things more salutary to a young man—conscious of that vitality of every power and every faculty, which makes existence itself an ecstasy—than that he should bring before himself from time to time by a determined effort those stern realities of our human being of which we have now spoken: God's discipline of pain and sickness, God's discipline of a suffering death. Let him enter, on one of these days of health and cheerfulness—while life smiles upon him, and Nature herself seems to sympathize with his gladness—the walls of that Hospital to which we are to give to-day, and which stands, as it were, by the highway of our everyday life to remind us of a condition most opposite to our own, to which nevertheless the very accident of an accident might at any moment reduce us. Let him stand there for a few moments

the thoughtful observer of the scene which presents itself. His pity will be stirred in him by the sight of every form and kind of suffering: little children clinging to a mother's bosom, as if enquiring of her what ails them and why: strong men brought down in a moment from a life of productive industry to the helplessness of accident or the wandering of fever: young wives waiting their turn for admission into the chamber of sickness, or listening with agonized eagerness for that physician's judgment which they must receive as the loved one's doom. It is good for him assuredly to be there. He will return from that visit a wiser if perhaps a sadder man. He will raise his heart to God in thankfulness for an undeserved exemption thus far from the stroke of pain. He will ask himself how the touch of sickness—sharp and sudden, or else gradual wasting sickness—would find or affect *him*. Is his heart so disciplined already beneath the will of God by a daily continuance in prayer and well-doing that he would hear with submission, hear without terror, the summons to a bed of sickness or an early grave? And thus he will have obeyed, in part, the profitable hint of the apostle, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.'

Christian friends, it is impossible for one advanced far beyond you in life's long journey, to contemplate without emotion his younger and less experienced comrades. He must know—if his life has not been screened from anxiety beyond the common lot of all men—how slippery is the surest standing, how fallacious may be the brightest promise, in one who is now preparing to set out for himself in that career

the end of which must be life eternal or eternal death. He must think of the solemn words, 'The last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few are chosen.' And he knows, if he be a Christian man, one and but one safeguard; open to all, infallible for all, yet, alas, certain to be refused by many; that which lies, half shown, half hidden, in the words of the text, 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' Yes, a heart opened daily with diligent thoughtfulness before the throne of grace—a life daily watched and tended by the sought and promised influence of the Holy Spirit of God—this, this is a security, the one security, alike against God's judgment here and God's condemnation hereafter: for this life is lived under God's protection, this heart is 'fulfilled with the heavenly benediction.'

Day by day let us carry our thoughts onward into the remote future, and forecast the one question and the one answer which will alone interest then. When all of life is gathered up for us within the curtains of a death-bed, the one only question of moment will be, 'In whom have I believed?' and the one only answer of peace will be, 'Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Gifts of mind and body, stores of knowledge and wisdom, powers once exercised for self-aggrandisement or even for the good of man, stirring incidents of political life, or sweet comforts of domestic love, all will then have passed back, for us, to the earth from which they were taken. One thing, one only, will survive the wreck of all: a soul redeemed and ransomed by the blood of Christ, a soul indwelt and quickened by the Eternal

Spirit. God in His mercy grant us this: and then, come ease or pain, come gladness or sorrow, come success or disappointment, come life or death, all shall be well: for 'we are Christ's and Christ is God's.'

V.

UNIVERSALITY AND INDIVIDUALITY OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL.

St John xii. 32.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

THE chief weight of this marvellous utterance—of this sentence of ten words, for it is no more in the Greek—is suspended upon two of them: the one marking a single event, the other a continuous consequence; the one passive, the other active; the one telling of something which was to be done to Christ, the other of something which Christ was to do; the one of a suffering which was to be the groundwork of an action, the other of an action which was to spring from the suffering. Christ must first 'be lifted up'—and then Christ 'will draw.' The Person lifted up, shall become, by that lifting, the magnet of universal man.

St John interprets for us, or we might have doubted the meaning of this lifting up.

Elsewhere the lifting up of Christ is the Ascension. 'Being by the right hand of God exalted'—it is the same word—is St Peter's description, on the great day of Pentecost, of that ascension which had in it the virtue of all the gifts of grace. And so again, when a few days afterwards the Apostles stood to answer

for themselves before the Sanhedrin, this was their account of the completion and consummation of the work of Redemption, 'Him hath God exalted (lifted up) with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.'

But in St John's Gospel the exaltation is always the Crucifixion. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He.' And in this place again, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth'...And 'this He said, signifying what death He should die.'

It is a marvellous paradox, this appropriation of the word 'exaltation' to a death of shame and anguish. It seems of itself to tell us, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'

Turn to the other word. Lifted up on the cross, I will 'draw' all men unto me. It is a very strong word. It is the word applied in the last chapter of this Gospel to the dragging to shore of the heavy and now almost breaking net. It is the word used in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the rough usage of two devoted men by the infuriated mob at Philippi: 'they caught Paul and Silas, and drew (dragged) them into the market-place unto the rulers.' It expresses no gentle hand of soft persuasion, but an overmastering force and a resistless power. It is almost, 'I will drag all men to myself.' The influence of the cross of Christ shall be like one of those natural forces of attraction or gravitation which allow no question, brook no delay, and will take no refusal.

We have touched upon two of the weighty words of

the brief verse before us: but the immediate purpose of its selection leads me to emphasize yet two more: 'all' men—unto 'me.'

Endeavouring to illustrate one particular aspect of the Gospel—that it is a 'wholesome,' that is, a healthy doctrine; and understanding by health the balance of the powers—not the preponderance of one, but the equilibrium of all the principles and functions of life; I have dwelt, on a former occasion, upon three pairs of opposite characteristics noticeable in Christ's words: naturalness and spirituality; grandeur and self-control; truthfulness and tenderness. To-day I would add, by itself, yet one other like combination—

The Universality and the Individuality of Christ's Gospel.

To reconcile the interests of the individual with the interests of the society, is one of the most difficult problems of government, whether in an institution or in the state.

The general and the particular are seldom in entire harmony: sometimes the universal predominates, sometimes the individual: in the later days of society, more often the former—the interests of the citizen becoming more and more subordinated to the real or supposed interests of the state, and day by day a more mechanical principle applied to all the processes of industrial, social, and political life.

But as no human system can be in a satisfactory condition if no attempt be made to harmonize the individual and the universal; as the wellbeing of any human constitution may be measured by its nearer or more distant approach to the realization of that har-

mony; so we should expect in a divine Gospel that it would prove its origin (in part) by this characteristic, that it holds in equilibrium the two opposite principles of universality and individuality, neglecting neither, comprehending both, and thus reflecting in itself that highest of all the attributes of God Himself—a presence stretching everywhere through space and time, and yet as minute in its supervision as it is magnificent in its expansion. 'Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all ages'—'He giveth fodder unto the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him.'

'I will draw all men unto me.'

1. Universality is one attribute of Christ's 'wholesome words.'

'But now we see not yet all' men drawn to Him. It is the saddest of the present experiences of the faithful. The Gospel is not yet earth-wide. Not yet are 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.' He does not yet reign everywhere over a willing and trusting people. It is perhaps the only real difficulty in the argument for Christ's Gospel. This slow growth, this limited influence, this always tardy and sometimes retrograde movement, this imperfect sway, this reluctant, resisted, inconsistent reception—what shall we say of it? The centuries are running their weary round, and Christ has not drawn all men to Him. The fact lies like a weight upon Christian hearts, and many have been their devices for shaking it off.

Some would try a doctrine of compromise. They would make the Gospel more conciliatory. Let it be

understood, they would say, that the Gospel has no hostility to the world's amusements, to the world's associations, to the world's ambitions. It is a narrow and arbitrary rule which separates between Christian and Christian, makes a Church within a Church, and would have Christ's real servants known from the nominal by being still, and in a sense never intended, 'a peculiar people.' The force of ridicule is added to the force of reasoning, and one barrier after another is broken down, until it almost seems as if there were no manner of life too pleasant, too luxurious, too mundane, too trifling, for the children of God and the expectants of heaven. This is one way of giving universality to the Gospel. And though it rests upon some true assumptions and corrects some mischievous fallacies, yet we feel at once that it is on the wrong tack altogether for its purpose: if this had been Christ's way of drawing all men to Him, He would not have refused so positively the proposal of the tempter, who said to Him, 'All this power will I give Thee, and the glory' at once of a world-wide kingdom—'If thou wilt' but fall down and 'worship me, all shall be Thine.'

Others would try a doctrine of philanthropy. They would make the Gospel a mere influence of social kindness. They would eliminate from it all its revelations (strictly so called) and leave it only that in which it expresses the instincts of human nature in the direction of kindliness and good-will. They would make Christ draw all men to Himself by merely echoing the better voice of fallen humanity, and thus awakening in man's bosom a response out of itself. The promotion of all manner of works of beneficence, the institution

of hospitals and dispensaries, the extension of education in all quarters, and the diffusion amongst all ranks of an instructive literature—these things, which are the indirect or at best the secondary influences of Christ's Gospel, they would make its primary object: and thus they would make that 'drawing' of which the text speaks, the simple attraction of men to a Man by the exhibition of a virtue which they can appreciate just because they have already in themselves its elements and its instincts. Whatever we may think of this view of the universality of the Gospel, however much we may admire its professed endeavour to give success to one part of Christ's mission, we must yet say, as believers in Revelation, that there needed not for this work either Bethlehem or Gethsemane or Calvary, and that certainly it leaves no room and no meaning for that other like saying of the same divine Master, 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' A man's own 'drawing' might have sufficed, if this were all.

And others, in their zeal for the universality of the Gospel, have tried what we may call a doctrine of postponement. They see that Christ's drawing is not yet universally effectual. They see that the very sound of the Gospel is not yet in all lands, and that, even where the sound is, the power is not. They will cut the knot. That which is not in this life shall be hereafter. Universality is with them Universalism. That truth which has been refused here, that holiness which has been despised here, that grace which has been resisted, that Saviour who has been trodden underfoot in this life, shall yet be felt and seen, shall yet be

sought and found, when the sun of this opportunity has gone down and set behind them. Christ's effectual drawing shall for many be hereafter. The 'great gulf fixed,' of which His own Parable told, shall not be impassable: either through purgatorial flames, or perhaps without them, all shall be well at last with the wicked, and they who would not be saved here shall yet have a chance, shall yet have a compulsion, of salvation there.

And where is he amongst us, who, if he could allow himself to speak where God has not spoken, would not thankfully cherish the hope thus avowed; would not feel the burden of life sensibly lightened, if he might believe that, in this large sense, the Gospel shall be 'preached also to them that are dead,' and that they who are 'judged according to men in the flesh,' may yet peradventure 'live according to God in the spirit?' that the time might yet come, were it but in the most distant and shadowy of all futures, when every resisting will should be not only subjugated but transformed, and Christ should reign over a universe of worshipping and adoring intelligences, fallen angels themselves converted to swell the diapason of praise? Yes, we could wish this, if it were the will of God. Yes, we could preach this, if it were a part of the 'wholesome word.' As it is, we can but say that it is no part of God's Revelation, no part of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can but say that they who presume thus to speak must have received some 'other Gospel,' which we, which the churches of God, have not received, and are deeply responsible for their interpolations of the living and life-giving word. Not thus can we dare

to mend the Gospel. 'Are there not twelve hours in the day?' then—'the night cometh.' Rather would we be found among those who leave our Lord Jesus Christ to tell us that which He had Himself first 'seen' in heaven. Rather would we quicken our own souls and the souls of others with the thought of the shortness of life, and the solemn, the everlasting issues which that life must decide. Rather would we feel with the Psalmist, 'I am horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake Thy law;' or with that holy man of a later generation, who spent hours of solitude week by week in tears and lamentations over the reprobation of the lost—over a mysterious eternity of anguish reserved for those who put from them through life the proffered salvation, and do final despite to the Spirit of grace.

The universality of Christ's Gospel is not this. It would not be a Gospel of health if this were so. We cannot trust ourselves thus to eliminate fear from a nature which God endowed with it. We want fear, every one of us, every day. The 'wholesome words' are full of it.

And yet He says, 'I will draw all men unto me.' There is a universality still.

A universality, first of all, of intention. God 'will have all men to be saved.'

A universality, in the second place, of invitation. 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' If ye have not life, it is because 'ye will not come to me.' 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in.'

A universality, in the third place, of potency. The cross has in it the virtue of a literally universal drawing.

If any one perish, it is not because the grace has fallen short, not because the vessel of the divine compassion is emptied, not because the atonement was partial, not because the Gospel efficacy is worn out or used up. 'And yet there is room[5].'

But the universality spoken of is something yet beyond this. It is of an effectual drawing that Christ speaks in the text: not of mere will, not of mere entreaty, not of mere potency, but of actual strength and success too. And therefore we add, fourthly, a universality of kind. Christ lifted up on the cross draws to Himself all kinds of men; men of all races, men of all classes, men of all occupations, men of all characters, men of all circumstances, men of all histories.

The magnet of Christ crucified has an attraction for 'all sorts and conditions of men.'

Take just an example or two, most applicable to ourselves.

Christ draws to Himself men of all characters.

One man is made for knowledge. Day after day he is adding to his stores of wisdom. He lives in books. In the absorbing interest of that life—whether it be the study of nature, or the study of man—whether it be the marvellous disclosures of science, or whether it be the scarcely less wonderful discoveries to be made by applying the microscope of a keen and practised criticism to the words of wise men of old and their dark sayings—in the delight of such a life, each day is too short for its work, and the pains of toil are unfelt in its rewards. Now does Christ draw to Himself that man? Has the magnet of the cross any attraction for that life? Tell me, ye who know what it is to invoke upon

the day's researches the wisdom of the all-wise, the blessing of the most merciful—to feel and know that it is in His light that you are seeking light, and that, when the light of earth fades, you have a light still before you above the brightness of the firmament. And you too who know it not: O, is there not something comfortless in that illumination of mind which is thick darkness withal to the soul? something unsatisfactory in that progress which a slight accident, a day's fever, failing sight, at last decaying intellect, may stop once for all, and stop for ever? Lifted up on the cross, Christ would draw you to Him, that He may make your light sevenfold and your life immortal.

And another man is all practical. Beyond the absolute requirements of this place, he cares little for study. His delight is in society, in all active pursuits, in all manly exercises. His view of life is altogether practical. He expects to be, he intends to be, he resolves to be, a man of influence and energy in his generation. Well—was not that life also within the scope of Christ? Did not Christ come to redeem that life also—not by bidding it go out of itself, but by showing it how to abide there with Him? This University was not created only for students and scholars: it was designed as a training-place for all careers, as a discipline for all characters. For none has it been more valuable, in this aspect, than for those who were to do the work of life in common English callings, and who were to begin that work here. These men are the salt of this place: the influence of its scholars and its mathematicians is secondary and more remote: it is *they* who mould the life—it is they who set the tone, and leaven the lump. Has

Christ no attraction for these? Nay, these are His own witnesses, His own workmen: through them He would affect the principles, and even breathe upon the souls, amongst which they here live and move and have their being. Let Him draw them to Himself. Seek Him daily—seek Him in earnest, honest, manly prayer—and see if He will not use you. Not by the affectation of singularity, and not by the assumption of superiority, but just by the shining through of light burning within, you may do a work here, such as clergymen cannot do, such as saints might envy.

Men too of all histories.

The life behind you is short, but it may have been eventful. I address some today who have early fallen—some too who through grace have been thus far pure. Each of these has something special to find in the cross of Christ. The one want it most of all: for the others it has perhaps the greater beauty.

Some have been unfortunate in their early training. Their very homes were not pure. Their first school was an initiation into mysteries of evil. Their last school was a succession of falls and repentances. They had little moral courage, and no help from the strength of others. Here they find themselves, as might be expected, not among the strong; rather receiving than communicating; and, as is the manner with such histories, peculiarly vacillating—this day resolving, tomorrow sinning, the third day repenting, the fourth day wavering again; and thus month by month and year by year till the near end comes—God grant it be not thus till the far end likewise. I think the cross of Christ ought to attract these. 'In remembrance that Christ

died for thee—In remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee'—yes, there is an attraction there for a man of this history.

And what is an attraction for the man of this history is an affinity for his opposite. The sinful man feels the attraction of the cross of Christ; but it has perhaps for him its repulsion too. It is a delightful thing to be forgiven: but then, to be cleansed? to be bound to be clean? Ah! if it could have stopped with the blood, which is the first witness! But the water, which is the second witness—and the Spirit, which is the third witness[1]—what of these? But the clean history can bear even these: is not afraid of them; sees their beauty, and can desire them. Let it desire them—for it too needs them: it also, without them, is unstable as water, and may become the very sport of sin.

We have read the text as though it were, 'all kinds of men.' It has been so. The Gospel of Christ crucified has been tried everywhere; and everywhere, though not yet with all men everywhere, it has been found indeed 'the power of God.' It has been of avail to make the idle man diligent, the selfish man loving, the proud man humble, the immoral man chaste, and the churl bountiful. It has made the scholar's study an oratory, and the hospitable home a sanctuary. It has turned the ambitious statesman into a self-sacrificing philanthropist, and (hardest perhaps of all) the indolent self-indulgent clergyman into a devoted pastor, going in and out before his people, and giving life itself for souls. Christ lifted up on His cross has drawn all kinds of men unto Him.

[1] See 1 John v. 6, 8.

May we hope—does He bid us to hope—that in so reading His words we have read them yet imperfectly? that, in literal truth, the day shall come, when 'all nations shall flow to Him?'—when the prayer of the Church, offered through long ages, shall have been perfectly answered, 'That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men'—'That thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations?' 'The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.' 'A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.'

2. Universality is one attribute of the wholesome words: individuality is the other. If all men, then every man. Universality alone is not health but disease. Universality alone may be a merely superficial influence; a Christendom, not a Church; a uniformity of profession, not a unity of spirit. Not only as a matter of history have all the great influences of this Gospel age been wrought through the convictions and through the self-devotions and through the life's energies of individual men: not only is it through the individual that masses have been wrought upon, and leavened (where they have been leavened) with the pervading power of the Gospel: not only thus: it is equally true that the mass acted upon has been a mass of individuals, and that then only has the effect wrought been either permanent or significant, when the individual soul has been converted, and the individual life transformed. The race can only be evangelized through the members. To excuse re-

pentance, to excuse faith, to excuse holiness, is, in other words, to excuse happiness, to excuse salvation, to excuse heaven. The Gospel kingdom, when it comes, must come not in name but in power: they who are drawn to Christ crucified must be drawn spiritually; and therefore drawn personally, and one by one. Universality is one attribute of the Gospel: but individuality is the other: and health is in the combination and balance of the two.

For this quality, like the former, may be not health but disease. There have been those in all ages—not least in our own—who have exaggerated the individual. They have made it, not the beginning only, and not the end only, but the whole, of the Christian life, to save the soul. Starting from that primary law of the physical as well as the spiritual being, known as the instinct of self-preservation, they have represented it in religion, as they never could have represented it in nature, as the sum total of a life's work. That which ought to have been just not left undone, kept in the background, and rather presupposed than spoken of, they have made the one aim and scope of the Gospel, the one single purpose for which any man should come to Him who 'to this end died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.'

Hence, first, a morbid self-consciousness: a perpetual scrutiny of the reality and growth of the spiritual life; a refusal to rest upon what has been done, in quiet confidence, and to walk day by day the little round of obvious duty—lest peradventure we should after all be deceived; lest (stranger still) we should be guilty of an aboriginal presumption, in trusting at all that we are

Christ's people, bought by His blood, and spoken to in His Gospel. Many a soul's life has been chilled, benumbed, thrust back, perhaps extinguished, by this incessant dwelling in the charnel-house, and groping among the 'dead men's bones' of a fallen nature inherited and a helpless infirmity yielded to.

Hence, secondly, a morbid exclusiveness: a perpetual wearing of armour, not against the spiritual foe, but against foes (real or fancied) of flesh and blood; a repulsing of natural sympathy, lest it should beguile into spiritual compromise; and a dwelling only amongst persons likeminded, who, if not likely to be tempters, are very likely to be flatterers and pacifiers and torpedos of the soul. Many a life has been drugged into uselessness by the specious (yet scarcely specious) resolution to go nowhere save into the society of the religious, lest peradventure, instead of doing good, I receive evil. How shall Christ's cause on earth be ever advanced, if a cord is thus to be drawn round the habitations of His people; if the motto 'Stand by thyself' is to be the watchword of the Christian, and the desire for spiritual safety is to take the place altogether of effort and enterprise, of lofty self-forgetfulness and Christlike self-sacrifice?

Hence, thirdly, a morbid presumptuousness: a perpetual introduction of the divine name into the thoughts and actions of the personal life, as though I were something select, something peculiar, something more than other men are—not perhaps meritoriously accepted, but then arbitrarily and capriciously favoured. Let those who have listened to the language or studied the biographies of persons trained in this school of doctrine

testify whether too often there lurks not the Pharisee's thanksgiving behind the Publican's confession; the self-confident thought, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are,' resting itself upon the very humility of the petition, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' O for one breath, we say, of that most human, most evangelical, most divine, supplement of St John—'And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself'—'God so loved the world, that He gave His Son.'

Hence, fourthly and lastly, in too many cases a morbid asceticism. For so it is that extremes of doctrine, like extremes of other opinion, oftentimes meet and are at one; and an eager and pugnacious Evangelism has been not so much the remote ancestress, as the living sister, of a devoted and bigoted Romanism. How is this? Because a morbid individuality—a deification of the personal safety—an idolatrous regard to the welfare, which is in other words the luxurious isolation, of the individual soul—lies at the very root of either system; and the natural haven of the man or the woman who claims exemption from the common sympathies and common associations of a baptized Church and a world in common redeemed is a seclusion nowhere so real and nowhere so consistent as in the monastic cloister. These things take different shapes, and bear very diverse names: but trace them to their source, and you will see them one—the forgetfulness of a universal Redemption, and the exaltation of spiritual ease above Christian duty.

Is there not then an individuality which is evangelical indeed?

There is. It is soon told in words: it is the first duty and the first happiness of every man to realize it in fact.

It has respect to three chief things.

First, it is the business of each one of us to apprehend the Gospel of a free, a personal absolution. 'If Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all men, then He took upon Himself my sins, even mine'—is an argument not more logically true than individually binding. There must be a personal transaction between God and the soul on this basis. There must be a solemn giving of the individual soul—exactly as it is seen to be and felt to be in history and in circumstance—into the hands of God Himself, on the ground of a revelation made by Him in the Gospel as to a free and total forgiveness of all sin through the alone merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. For lack of this, many men are 'all their lifetime subject still to bondage,' even though they say with their lips, and hold tenaciously as a doctrine, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.' Yes, but of whose sins? the sins of others, or your own?

Again, it is the business of each one of us to apprehend for himself the Gospel promise of a holy and divine Spirit to dwell personally in him as the life of his life and the soul of his soul. God 'will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him:' then, if that be true—if that be true—I have only to ask and I shall receive. This too is a transaction between God and the man, which must by its very nature be individual and even secret. No frequency of attendance on the prayers and ordinances of the Church will do this for us: such attendance, to be worth anything, presupposes

and rehearses this. God is a lover of acts: and there are acts of the soul as well as acts of the life.

Thirdly—and I will add none else—it is the business of each one of us, having thus stamped upon himself by an individual act the seal of his consecration—the double seal of a divine absolution and a divine indwelling—then to go forth as a forgiven man and as a spiritual man, not indeed to presume upon what he has done—not indeed to contradict by daily inconsistency, or to sin away by daily trifling, the relation towards God into which he has thus solemnly entered—but still, I will say it without fear of misconstruction, as much as possible to forget himself; to forget himself in his Saviour's service, and to forget himself in giving his very life for his brethren. Let the individual life, thus far, and in this holy sense, be merged and lost in the relative. Let no cowardly misgiving haunt him, lest perhaps he be going amongst those who share not to the full, or perhaps share not at all, his convictions and his aspirations. Let him go, not asking where he is safest, but who most want him. Let him go, calling in beforehand, and calling in throughout, the forgiving grace and the inhabiting Spirit. Let him go, not to display himself, but to glorify God; leading others, who mark his kind words, his wise counsels, his gracious spirit, his peaceful countenance, to think of his God with more reverence, and of his Saviour with more love. And God 'will keep the feet of his saints:' He will not suffer one who thus mixes amongst men to be suddenly surprised or 'greatly moved.' Thus through him not least shall the Almighty Lord make good His Divine saying—

'I, lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

In addressing myself, as I ever desire to do, more especially to the younger half of this congregation, it has appeared to me that the individual part of the subject was of yet more appropriateness than the universal. If I might presume to interpret the present life of this University by the memories of a former generation, I should apprehend that the principal danger lay in an overgrowth of the social life and a comparative neglect of the personal. College life ought to be in great part corporate: it is too often (which is a different thing) gregarious. The one shows itself in earnestness to bear the individual part in promoting to the uttermost the wellbeing of the whole. The other shows itself in a selfish use even of the collective being; in an eagerness to make society minister to self, instead of surrendering self (as far as may be) to the service of society.

But these remarks—which have perhaps a wider application than that to which this last word must confine itself—have a special appropriateness to the religious life of this beloved home. I think that there is a danger of this also being too much gregarious and too little personal. In these days of early manhood, we are disposed to take Revelation for granted—to join in Christian worship and listen to Christian teaching—to conform ourselves, less or more, to habits of feeling and practice 'received by tradition from our fathers'—rather than to enter into that personal intercourse, of which I have faintly spoken, with God Himself, by way of settling for life the faith which is to be our compass,

and the hope which is to be our guiding star. This kind of belief may suffice us while we are propped by numbers and stimulated by friendly sympathies. It will not suffice us in the next stage. It will not suffice us when we come to teach, to toil, to struggle, to combat, to suffer, to die. When you go forth hence, into the parish which is to be your work-field, into the metropolis which is to be your battle-ground—into the secret study in which you are to investigate all truth, into the wilderness of doubt and disputation in which you are to be 'with the wild beasts, tempted of Satan'—into the home in which you are to know sorrow, to endure bereavement, to feel the touch of anguish; at last, all alone, to face death—then this gregarious faith will be a treacherous reed to lean upon: it will only 'go into your hand and pierce it:' woe is unto us then, if we cannot say betimes, 'Now I believe, not because of the word of others, but because I have heard Him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

Suffer the word of affectionate exhortation which would bid you, here in your College life, to habituate yourselves early to a thoughtful solitude. Let no day pass without its calm serious moments of self-examination and confession, of earnest prayer and holy communing. I would dare to say, in words plainer still—founded upon observation and experience of that life which is now yours—secure to yourselves immoveably the first fresh hours of the blessed Sunday for absolute privacy: let the thoughts suited to the day ingrain themselves in you before you seek or receive the society of any one: it will give a sweet-

ness to the day, and a consecration to the week, such as nothing else can—

'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.'

VI.

OBLIVIONS AND AMBITIONS OF THE LIFE OF GRACE.

Philippians iii. 13.

Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

St Paul has several metaphors for his apostolical life.

Sometimes he is a servant; executing the orders, day by day, of a living and speaking Master.

Sometimes he is a steward; charged with the keys of an exhaustless storechamber, and dispensing to the members of a vast household what he calls the mysteries, that is, the indiscoverable but now revealed secrets, of divine and life-giving truth.

Sometimes he is a herald; making proclamation of peace with God through the death, and through the life after death, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes he is a builder; raising upon the one only foundation the superstructure of collective and individual lives, 'growing into an holy temple,' at last into 'an habitation of God through the Spirit.'

Sometimes he is a husbandman; tilling the fallow ground of nature, and sowing it with the good seed of grace and the Gospel.

Sometimes he is a priest; offering up the perpetual sacrifice of a devoted life and an evangelized world.

Sometimes he is a soldier; enlisted into Christ's army, fighting not against flesh and blood but against spiritual foes, demolishing the strongholds of pride and sin, and waging an incessant warfare against the various developements and the successive confederations of evil.

Sometimes, as in the passage now before us, he is an athlete contending for a prize; a runner in that long and contested foot-race, of which the course is the life of earth, and the goal the life of heaven.

He tells us here how the race began. Christ Himself 'apprehended' him; laid upon him the strong arm as of an almighty compulsion, and constrained him to make for the mark which He set full in his view. Ever since the day when Christ called to him from on high—stopped him at the gate of Damascus, struck from his hand the weapon of persecution, and shrivelled up in his bosom, as by a lightning flash, the commission of the high priest—ever since that day, which had turned his former gains into losses, and made him count his own righteousness a mere refuse and abomination 'for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord,' he has been running the race set before him, 'not as uncertainly,' but with a definite adherence to its rules and a resolute determination for success; not 'counting himself to have apprehended,' not relaxing his efforts as he nears the goal, but straining every sinew and nerve to the uttermost, if so be he may at last reach the winning-post and attain the imperishable wreath which hangs thereon. 'This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are

behind,' that part of the course which has already been traversed, 'and reaching forth unto,' straining every power to the uttermost after, 'those things which are before,' that remainder of space which lies still between me and the goal, 'I press toward the mark'—I press on according to (by the rule and direction of) the mark or goal—'for the prize of the high calling,' what is elsewhere termed 'the heavenly calling'—'of God in Christ Jesus.'

This is St Paul's account of his own Christian life. And just as in another Epistle he applies the same similitude generally, and says to his Corinthian congregation, 'So run, that ye may obtain;' even thus to the Philippians he points in like manner the moral of his own example, and says, 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.'

Here then we have before us another of the 'wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ;' that which may well form the text of a practical and (I trust) salutary meditation on—

The Oblivions and the Ambitions of the Life of Grace.

'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.'

In the combination of these two maxims lies one of the most striking illustrations of the healthiness of the Gospel.

1. Memory, wise men say, ought to be the sieve of knowledge; 'captious,' but (in part) 'intenible.' Too often memory retains the worthless, but lets the precious go. In some few instances, memory keeps everything: words, wise and unwise; facts, trivial and important; dates of

great battles and insignificant accessions; looks, gestures, small blunders, unfortunate speeches; all indiscriminately, and all equally. This is as bad as having no memory; let such a man pray that he may forget. Even the Gospel teaches oblivion. 'Forgetting,' St Paul says, 'those things which are behind.' It is a point to which he evidently attaches great importance. He makes it, we may almost say, one half of Christian living. The oblivions of the Gospel are one part, and the ambitions of the Gospel are the other.

It is quite true, that there is a morbid as well as a healthy forgetfulness.

For example.

A man may forget past warnings. The fool despises correction, and the sinner forgets it. God has dealt with him in part by discipline. He has made him rue the day when he took the first step in sin. That idle look, that wrong thought, that purposeless or half unmeant word, led on to sin: you were sorry—you said you had learned experience by suffering—but you did the same again. God corrected you—and you 'refused to receive correction.' 'Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.'

And a man may forget past mercies. What is the past life of any of us but a continuous, an unbroken succession of undeserved blessings? And, alas, what is the past life of many of us, but a continuous, an unbroken succession of those forgetfulnesses which are unthankfulnesses too?

These are not 'the things behind' which St Paul

makes it a point of duty to forget. On the contrary, he is never weary of recurring to the greatness of that long-suffering with which Christ has dealt with him, amidst provocations for which he makes it no justification, though he may record it as a fact, that they were committed 'ignorantly in unbelief.'

The time is short, and therefore we will contract for today the enumeration of morbid exaggerations or isolations of the rule here before us, and go straight to the thing pointed at; mentioning in two particulars the Christian use of what may be called (however inaccurately) the divinely implanted faculty of forgetfulness.

There is first, then, an oblivion of the irreparable.

Let us not be misunderstood. There is an aspect in which even the irreparable ought not to be forgotten. St Paul never lost the remembrance of an irretrievable past. The long years of his Judaism, with all that it led to and issued in—that orthodoxy which he learned to call blasphemy, and that zeal which he came to reckon among the chief of sins—this time past of his life, though done with as to its guilt, was daily recalled by him for humiliation; dwelt upon to enhance the divine longsuffering, though dismissed as to any doubt which it might suggest of the divine absolution.

And in these last words lies the difference between a dangerous and a healthy forgetfulness of the irreparable.

There is such a thing, no doubt, as a presumptuous disregard of past sin. Because God has forgiven, it follows not that we must forget. There is a 'going softly all our days' suitable to the case of him who has been much forgiven. There is a posture before God, and there is a carriage towards man, befitting, and no

more than befitting, one who has fallen into great transgression. That man ought never again to be accused of levity or suspected of vanity. That man ought to hold his mercy by a more lowly tenure, and to cherish his grace with a more anxious scruple. And if he does not so there is no safety. The foe watches, if he watches not: the tempter is behind the door still, and will enter at the first sign of a sleeping porter, and an unlocked, unbarred, unchained door.

The oblivion of the irreparable is not this. What I have been must not be forgotten ever: it ought always to be the groundwork of feeling, the stimulus of action, and the undersong of praise. The maxim, 'The greater the sinner the greater the saint,' is at once a lie and a blasphemy. There is such a thing as a light or even a boastful treatment of a sinful past, which is not evangelical language, and not safe for the sinner.

But there is, on the other hand, an oblivion of the irreparable which is at once true and salutary. The past is. No regrets, no tears, no repentances, can make it undone. Then accept it, recognize it, start from it. Do not expect to be that which your individual history forbids that you should be. God sees you as you are: see yourself so. God knows by what gradual steps of sin you have fallen to this estate: God knows by what gradual steps of repentance you have risen to this. Such as you are, be such—such when you kneel before your God—such when you go abroad amongst men. 'Forget the things behind.' That which you cannot be, by reason of your sin, dismiss it. That which you cannot be, by reason of your sin, forget it. If there is something which you cannot be, there

is something also which you can be. If you cannot be a saint, you may be a penitent: if you cannot 'sit on the right hand' or 'sit on the left,' at least you may yet be a 'hired servant'—at least you may yet be 'a doorkeeper in the house of your God.' Rest there, and be thankful. Merely to dwell among the thoughts of what might have been is unreal and therefore unprofitable. Learn this lesson—difficult like all lessons truly learned in the school of Christ—the oblivion of the irreparable.

Learn secondly, and on the other hand, the oblivion of the attained. That is it of which St Paul here speaks. He 'counts not himself to have apprehended:' in that sense chiefly he forgets the things behind.

The experience of life makes us almost weary of the records of Christian experience as now received. If I had my choice, a man is tempted to say, I would dwell rather with the irreligious. There at least I shall find reality—I shall find naturalness—I shall find humility. There conceit is not, nor ill-concealed pride, nor self-complacency dressing itself in an ostentation of thankfulness. There we hear nothing about humble instruments, nor about being privileged to do a work for God. There are no publications of the triumphs of self-sacrifice, nor of the wonderful achievements wrought by the first appearance in the home of the ungodly of the saintly man or the gifted woman. Ah! how different was it in the first days. Where in St Paul's Epistles do we find anything which offends thus the palate of taste, or thus grates upon the ear of modesty? There, on the contrary, we find an utter self-forgetfulness, a remembrance honestly made of sins,

and a hearty sense that Christ is all, and that whatever is is of Him. We have got the *words*, and too much of them; but we have lost the feeling and the thing signified. The minister of Christ must tell his triumphs on the platform; and the woman who may not preach Christ in churches must preach herself through the medium of the narrative, the memoir, or the autobiography.

'Forget,' St Paul says, 'the things behind.' If God has enabled you to win back your own soul from evil, or to save a brother's soul from death, thank Him for it and then forget it. If you who were once the slave of sin have become through divine grace able to see and to follow the light of life and of immortality, stay not to reflect upon it: press on, linger not, that you may not only enjoy the foretaste but also win the crown. When St Paul forgot the things behind, think what there was in it. He had 'seen Jesus Christ,' and received from His own lips the apostolical mission. He had left all and followed Him. He had demolished by a stroke the whole fabric of an almost completed self-righteousness, and set out quite afresh in a race of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and self-crucifixion. And yet he forgot all this. What have *we* to forget? Where, in our case, is the edifice of the natural virtue? where, in our case, is the achievement of the spiritual grace? If it be there, it is to be forgotten: if it be not there, who shall measure the depth of the just, the Christian self-abasement?

In what sense can I—let each one ask himself—be said to be engaged in this competition, this candidateship for a heavenly prize? to be indeed running a race,

and to have a part of the course behind? Is there not, for me at least, in such language, a feeling of insincerity, almost of profaneness? In what sense has Christ yet apprehended me? Or if that indeed be true, in some slight degree, of all the baptized, at least in what sense can I either forget a Christian past or disclaim a Christian attainment?

'Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,' let these questions not go unanswered! Assist the answer by another question—What know I of a Gospel ambition?

2. Every feeling and every instinct of man's nature finds its recognition and its correction in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is so with fear, it is so with love; it is so with anger, it is so with ambition. Thus not least the Gospel itself is proved to be a word for all men, by being a word for the whole of each.

Look at that impulse which is here dealt with. What is life without ambition? What is man without ambition? Show me the mind which feels not its stimulus, and I can designate the life at once as tame, spiritless, and wellnigh joyless.

I should expect to find something about ambition in the Bible. Yes, of course serious warnings against its excess, against its restlessness, against its misdirection. But not warnings only. I should expect to find such a principle of action, such an engine of influence, such a colour and zest and spring of life, adopted too and used and ennobled by the Gospel. I cannot think that Christ would let it die out from human life, or lie rusting and disparaged in the breasts of His people.

I know indeed that there is a morbid use of ambition.

Morbid even in this world's estimate. To call a man ambitious is but doubtful praise. To represent him as influenced chiefly by ambition, in his pursuit of objects or in his exercise of talents, would be to damage him in the eyes even of worldly judges. Ambition is sometimes called, is often felt to be, vulgar. If it has respect only to position, only to rank, only to office, only to power, much more only to emolument, men feel that it does not elevate, that it may even debase and spoil the character. Certainly One who came to us from heaven would not sanction, would not fail to reprove, such ambitions. In His eyes earth's prizes could not glitter. He who had seen God, He who had made the world and all things therein, who (even upon earth) was still, as to His divine nature, 'in heaven, in the bosom of the Father,' could not bid us to fall down and worship any object of sense and time, any image of man's erection—not the honour, not the applause, not even the calm judicial approval (for its own sake) of 'a man that shall die.' All such ambitions must be morbid, when the light of God falls on them.

But ambition itself is not sinful. Sinful in its exaggeration, sinful in its misdirection, sinful in its isolation, it is not sinful in itself: it budded in Paradise, it shall bloom in heaven.

Three times the word itself—the plain word 'ambition,' which is 'the love of honour'—occurs in the pages of Holy Scripture. Translators shrank from expressing it: they diluted or paraphrased its strong decisive utterance—called it in one place 'studying,' in another 'striving,' in another 'labouring'—either because they liked not the sound, or because they were perplexed by its context.

For strange indeed to our conception is the place of the word, and its application, in Scripture.

It can surprise no one that it is St Paul who appropriates it. We should look for something about ambition in the utterances of that earnest, noble, aspiring soul. The man who wrote, 'I press toward the mark,' is the man to tell us of a motive, and to explain to us how that which is ambitious in nature shall refine and spiritualize itself into a Christian grace. He applies the word to three subjects, and his example will teach us to apply it to a fourth.

In his earliest Epistle he uses it, and bids the Thessalonians not only (as we read it) to 'study' but to 'be ambitious to be quiet.'

By a marvellous yet most intelligible paradox he sets before Christian men first of all the ambition of tranquillity. He boldly ties ambition to its very opposite. If there is a life which we should describe as void of ambition, it is the still tranquil existence of a man contented with the station in which God has placed him, and finding in its round of common duties the very goal and rest of his aspirations. Yet this is the life which St Paul connects with ambition. 'Be ambitious to be quiet, and to do your own business.'

I address many, even in this centre of youthful activity, who are not, in the common sense of the word, ambitious. Their ideas of happiness are not connected with a career of professional success or political renown. They have no intention of rising into general notice by any of the ordinary roads to honour. They expect to be, they are satisfied to be, what former generations of their house have been, men

living upon their own, and contented (that is, as the word means, 'contained') within it. Whether they have much, or whether they have little, it bounds their desire, and they would have it so. A quiet life, they say, is to their taste: they are not ambitious.

If an older man might offer his counsel, in the foreview of a life which may God crown (as He is evermore ready to do) with His peculiar blessing, could he fail to say this to them? A quiet life is of all lives the happiest: but a quiet life must not be a torpid life, must not be a purposeless life, must not be a self-indulgent nor a selfish life. And it might easily become any one or all of these things. Take St Paul's hint. Carry an ambition into it. Learn from his words the ambition of tranquillity. Let your quiet life be an object with you. Take the measure of its happiness beforehand: know what it is; what in duty, what in capability, what in its course, what in its end: and then, as such, propose it to yourself betimes: study it, plan it, aspire to it, pray for it. Let tranquillity be an ambition, and it will sparkle with a new lustre and carry with it the antidote to its own evil.

There is another ambition of which St Paul tells—and that is the ambition of approbation. Here indeed we are, at first sight, on commoner ground. This is what ambition often seeks: perhaps, if traced to its source, this is always its meaning. 'Wherefore we labour,' St Paul says to the Corinthians—but the real word is again, 'we are ambitious—whether present or absent, to be accepted of Him.' The former ambition was, in sound at least, the lowest of all: this surely, even to the ear of sense, is lofty enough, magnificent

enough, for the most aspiring. Ambition is here brought face to face, not with duty only, but with religion, with revelation, with God Himself. Ambition is the love of honour: here St Paul, echoing his Master's words, says, 'Receive not honour one from another'—that sort of honour which drags you and binds you down to earth, which makes faith impossible, which becomes at last an impassable barrier between the soul and God—receive not honour one of another, but seek ye with all your seeking 'the honour that cometh from God only.' Present or absent—'at home in the body,' or 'at home with the Lord'—let this be your ambition, to be acceptable, to be well pleasing, to Him.

That which was on St Paul's lips so full of meaning and so instinct with life has become on ours the mere echo of a distant voice, carrying in it neither persuasion nor indeed reality. The purpose, the effort, the desire, to please Christ is little more with most men than an unexpressive and unimpressive phrase for duty: we just accept it as such, but it does not move us, it scarcely reproves.

And yet what are we if this be so? Not runners, surely, in the Christian race, if the thought of Christ's approval is no more to us than this. With St Paul the approbation of Christ was an ambition—it was *the* ambition—in other words the interest, the zest and sparkle, of his whole being. Might but his ambition kindle ours. This approbation of Christ in presence or absence, is it not something desirable, something attractive, something (could we but have it) wonderfully satisfying? It is the only thing of which a man can make sure. Other objects of ambition come and go:

they are remote, or they are ambiguous, at least they are precarious, at least they are perishable: life may not reach them, death must withdraw them. But it is otherwise with the approbation of Christ. 'In His favour is life.' 'In His light' men first and only 'see light.' His smile penetrates within, stirs the very life of being, and opens to the grateful soul the promise, the prospect, yea, the foretaste and the fruition of heaven. It is not as a stern solemn duty, it is as an ambition, that we should set before this congregation the thought of the approbation of Christ.

There is a well-known Church, in one of the most squalid parts of London, in which the minister, I am told, gathers around him on Sunday evening, after the service is ended, a little circle of youthful, almost childish, listeners, to whom it is no offence to address literally the inspired saying, 'Let him that stole steal no more.' It is assumed that they come from and will return to the haunts not of destitution only but of crime. Those haunts are their home: they have none other. How are these strange auditors—for strange they must appear to our notions of a congregation—how are these strange listeners—attentive, intelligent, impressible—how are they pleaded with? By the love of Jesus Christ—by the desire for His love—by the ambition of His approbation. For the sake of Jesus, crush that rising thought of wickedness, that returning lust of dishonesty. For the sake of Jesus, be hungry rather than steal. For the sake of Jesus, do that little act of kindness—carry that morsel of bread to the starving, sit by that sick brother—mend that coat, patch that shoe, for the love of Jesus. It is a noble

mission, to awaken such an ambition—at once so new, and so natural—in such bosoms. God grant that no folly of Ritualism[1] and no falsehood of Romanism may be suffered to enter in and mar that work.

But shall that ambition which is found so powerful a motive in hearts depraved and lives degraded—shall that ambition of approbation, which can keep young criminals out of prisons, and redeem from hell itself souls bespoken as it were and labelled for perdition—shall it find no place in lives and in hearts like those now appealed to, where crime is still a horror, and every generous impulse has its native home? If you would ever know what is the comfort of the divine love, what the energy and fire of the divine life below, begin at once to refer the passing day, with all its little items of business and pleasure—its studies, its amusements, its relaxations, its companionships—to the direction, to the arbitration, to the approval and blessing, of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Be ambitious, in sight and out of sight, to be accepted with Him. Ask Him, morning by morning, as a real and living Person, to 'order your going' for the day, and to 'make your way acceptable to Himself.' Night by night, carry back to Him the day's report—not unstained (it may be) by sin, not unblotted with tears of repentance—yet still the record of a sincere purpose to please Him, and still therefore a record not despised by Him nor rejected.

There is yet a third ambition of which St Paul speaks to the Romans. It is the ambition of distinctiveness—of a separate work, and a definite mission.

[1] [I leave the words as they were spoken in 1866: they jar a little upon me in 1888.]

Thus he speaks. 'Yea, so have I strived'—but again the word is, 'so am I ambitious—to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.' It is the nearest approach of any in Scripture to that kind of ambition which we call personal. At the first hearing we are inclined almost to say, Does St Paul choose his work? is he not willing to take any work—to go first, or to go second, or to go last, to a particular place or land, as God sends him? No doubt. But he is sent thus and not thus. He is intended to go first where he goes at all. It might have been otherwise: but that is God's will concerning him. It is thus, he tells the Corinthians, that he knows the limits of his province. He knows by this sign that they belong to it—namely, that he got to them first. That was the proof to which he appeals of his right to their obedience. And that which in one aspect was a mission, was in another aspect an ambition. St Paul encouraged in himself, he did not mortify, this ambition (not of distinction but) of distinctiveness. He was ambitious to have a work peculiar to himself, and a province which should be all his own.

And we think that his language—which is, in other words, the expression of the will of God—sanctions and justifies some such feeling as this now. We think that men would do the work of God better if they availed themselves of His gracious permission to choose their work, to plan it, and to keep to it. It ought to be one of the most serious (I had almost said, one of the most

solemn) functions of a young man's education—most of all, of that closing portion of it which has its place in the University—to ponder the question, not only what particular profession, but also what special department of that particular profession, will best suit his disposition, turn his education to account, promote his welfare and happiness, and call into exercise those faculties and those talents with which God in the sovereign distribution of His gifts has been pleased to endow him. I would have no man leave this place without a definite ambition concerning his work in life. Subject indeed we must needs be—at the beginning, in the midst, and to the last day of life—to a controlling, an overruling, an often disturbing and disappointing Providence. God must dispose: he who forgets this ruins all. But it is not God's will that we should be the mere sport of circumstance, waiting upon events to decide for us, and sitting still to see what happens. 'Every man hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that:' and amongst these gifts is the power of reasoning upon them; of deciding, under God, to go this way or that, to work here or there, to do this or that, to be this or that—and, having so decided, therein humbly yet trustfully to abide. There is divine warrant in Scripture for an ambition of distinctiveness.

St Paul's ambition was to preach Christ where He was not yet named. The corresponding ambition in a Christian heart now would be to find some neglected place, and to give a life to its evangelization. It may be in what is, in itself and for some men, the noblest of callings, a missionary life. It may be in a line of duty, at first sight far less enterprising, but making

(if it be possible) in the long run a yet heavier demand upon the energy, upon the perseverance, upon the devotion.

It is a great honour to a place of education to have sent out evangelists. One devoted life, even one sacrificed life, is worth a thousand lives husbanded to old age in commonplace respectabilities. When Cambridge sent out Henry Martyn to die, at one and thirty, in the peopled solitude of Tocat, it was no waste: that sacrifice had in it the seed and germ of countless self-devotions: that life came back hither, to stir a thousand lives into the imitation of its own heroism.

And when now we are mourning over a more recent bereavement, and recalling here to mind, amidst the loved scenes of his youth, the resolute diligence, the blameless example, the delightful converse, the stedfast friendship, of one who became afterwards the Metropolitan Bishop of India—inclined almost to repine at the thought of a removal so sudden, so cheerless, so premature—without a deathbed and without a sepulchre; yet let us check the thankless murmur, and remind ourselves rather that here was a distinctive work granted to life, and a distinctive death sent to close it: a great work, thoroughly grasped and powerfully handled; and a noble, almost a martyr's end, setting the seal of perpetual remembrance upon the honoured cherished name, and rousing, we doubt not, many a heart, amongst disciples and strangers, to go forth to live his life, and (if God will) to die his death.

To have educated such men, and to have given such men as these back to God, is a great glory, and a great grace too, vouchsafed to an illustrious seminary of

Christian learning. These things enkindle afresh at Christ's altar the torch of apostolical zeal, and hand it on, with new life and new hope, to generations yet to come.

But, after all, there are home-ambitions not less apostolical: only the more safe, if the less illustrious.

When, sixty years ago, a young student left this University, crowned with its honours, and betook himself to a dull, almost repulsive, manufacturing midland village, there to spend and be spent, through half a century, for a people, often thankless, of whom he was to be by turns the pastor and the schoolmaster and the physician and the nurse—always and in all things the friend; toiling for them by night and day, till the inexhaustible spirit was at last prisoned in a worn-out, crippled, dying body; and to be laid at last between two buttresses of his church, between the graves of two lost sons, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the just; I say that that life was quite as distinctive in its work, quite as apostolical in its single purpose and in its self-sacrificing devotion, as if it had been transplanted to the other side of the globe, and breathed out, through accident or fever, in the burning wastes of Asia Minor, or in the sea-like stream of the rushing eddying Ganges, in the professed service of the Church's missions.

It is an omen of good to this University, that such ambitions are still rife here; that men are still to be found in our Colleges, who will set before themselves in youth, and cherish through advancing years, the noble purpose of making Christ known in England, in places where otherwise His Gospel would have been, if not a

name unheard, at least a power unfelt and lifeless. We must not speak of the living, as we may and ought to speak of the dead: otherwise I would tell of one man, known to many of us, who has given himself, already for a quarter of a century, to the service of one remote, obscure, and almost nameless hamlet; has reclaimed it from a practical heathenism for the Gospel, and made it, by his own single devotion, complete in all the appliances of an English parish, and in all the blessings of an evangelical church.

These are the ambitions which we would propose to you, in the foreview of a life which must be spent somewhere, and in the disposal of which God gives to many of you an almost unrestricted choice. To be the evangelist of some English village seems to me to open one of the most glorious as well as most self-sacrificing ambitions which can be offered to a young man full of energy, full of faith and love and of the Holy Ghost.

Today I am to speak to you of one particular work; a work close to our own doors, and having a peculiar claim upon the sympathies of this congregation. There is a spiritual destitution—there is a famine of the Word and of the ministrations of grace—in one large and populous district of this University town. You are asked to make provision by your almsgiving this day for the support and for the extension of Christian ministrations amidst that too long neglected population. I would place this call, if it might be so, within the scope of that ambition of distinctiveness, of which we have last spoken. Let us bring to a point any good impressions which God's Word today may have made upon us. Let us resolve that this one collection, to be

made at the doors of the church this afternoon, shall amount to the whole stipend, for one year, of one additional clergyman. Let the almsgiving of this service amount to a hundred pounds. What is that sum to ask of this congregation? I hear with sorrow—but I hear also with some incredulity—that the generosity of this University on occasions like this is not what it used to be; that some occupants of these seats and galleries are not ashamed now, as once (I think) they would have been, to pass by the plates held for their offering; or else to put into them that sort of gift which not only 'doth cost them nothing,' but rather affronts than honours the sacred name of charity. I pray you, wipe out the reproach. Let not the meannesses of more ignorant congregations find encouragement in a church like ours. Nay, I have seen myself in northern churches, filled only with labouring men, an alacrity and bounty in giving which might put to shame a congregation of princes. I will hope, and I will even entreat, that the gatherings of this day may be on a scale in some degree commensurate with the ability of the givers and with the importance of the object.

Finally, and in one word only, there is the ambition, not of tranquillity, not of approbation, not of distinctiveness, but of attainment; not of a definite work, but of a safe end. St Paul lives thus that he may end well. 'If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.' Let this aim be ours, and we shall win. Set before yourselves this resolution—early in life, and later in life, and to the last day of life—'I must reach the goal.' I must not be amongst those who trifle away the precious hours, and never set out in earnest in the race

set before them. I must not be amongst those, yet more unhappy still, who for a time 'run well,' and then 'are hindered' that they should not win their crown. 'So run, that ye may obtain.' If there be first in us this mind—this ambition, this resolution, this determination, of success—all will be well. All else will find its place, if we can only say with St Paul, 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before—

I press toward the mark.'

VII.

INDOLENCE.

Hebrews vi. 12.

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

ST JUDE bids us to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.' He speaks of Christian people as an army of 'holy (consecrated) men,' to whose keeping there has been entrusted a sort of sacred banner, a standard of divine loyalty and allegiance, for the safety of which they are made responsible to their King. This banner is 'the faith;' that revelation of truth (spoken of last Sunday) which is presented to the individual faith as its object of apprehension. This faith, 'once (that is, once for all) delivered,' is in jeopardy. It has to be 'contended for;' nay, St Jude's word is, 'contended over'—as though it were already struck down, 'laid low, even to the ground,' and the business of the faithful few were to cover, to protect, to fight over it. It is a strong figure; certainly as true and as forcible in our days as in his. And it could not have been inappropriate to make this the text of these sermons; to bid the occupants of this church, older and younger alike, to fight the battle of the imperilled faith of the Church in this their day. Where, if not in an English

University, can we look for champions of God's truth—for the fighting men of His Church in reference to doctrine? Nevertheless we have not chosen this particular topic. Not because we disparage its importance; not because we think that anywhere it could be more suitable: but for these two other reasons. First, because it could not even here come home to all men: there must be even in this congregation many who feel that they have no aptitude, and therefore no call, to come forth as the disputants and controversialists of their day, even on God's behalf. And secondly, because there is always a risk in this service, a spiritual risk: there is so much in it which is unwholesome; such a tendency to personality; such a temptation to wrath and wrangling; such a liability to seek triumphs rather than to win souls; such a fatal readiness to put doctrine in the place of practice, and opinion in the place of life; above all, so terrible a likelihood of overlooking oneself, and, in the zeal of a supposed anxiety for the faith, forgetting that one 'weightier matter,' which is faith itself.

Therefore, instead of bidding each man, and each young man, in this congregation, to become a disputant for the faith, however seriously and sorely imperilled in this late (perhaps latest) period of the Church's trial, we have said this rather, Look to your own faith: guard it, watch over it, your choicest, your most precarious possession: and in so doing you will best be accomplishing that which St Jude, and the Spirit who spake in him, meant, for us, when he charged the men of his day to contend and to struggle over the faith itself. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood:' we wrestle against spiritual foes; and it is the first stratagem of their subtle, their

most experienced warfare, to turn off the attention of the soul from the true key of the position, from the actual point of attack.

We have proposed then in the plainest and most practical way to do what an old king of Judah proposed to his enemy the king of Israel, namely, 'to look our foe in the face;' to think with ourselves what are some of those adversaries to our faith—in other words, to our own personal insight into, and interest in, the things of God—with which we must enter into conflict day by day if we would be believing men; if we would ourselves 'fight the good fight of faith,' and 'lay hold on eternal life.'

We have placed first in this list the spirit of Unreality; that habit of holding for truths many doctrines which we have never grasped and never handled, of going out to battle in armour which we 'have not proved,' of worshipping God in words and forms which, for us, at the time, mean nothing—which, if in one sense the opposite, is in another sense an opponent, one amongst many, of that spiritual vision, that sight of the unseen, that soul's intuition, which is the definition of faith.

To-day we will change the subject, and speak, under the guidance of the text, of another enemy of the personal faith, which is the spirit of Indolence. 'That ye be not slothful, but followers (imitators) of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises.' The words themselves give the contrast. 'Not slothful, but men of faith.' Indolence, sluggishness, is a foe of faith.

And where, my brethren, shall we begin, and where

end, in grappling with this foe? What department of the being is his stronghold? or from what region—of body, soul, or spirit—is he fenced out?

1. It can never be unnecessary—not even here—to dwell, though it must be summarily and in enigma, upon the warfare of sloth in the body.

We do not wish to estimate over-highly that 'bodily exercise' of which St Paul says in all senses—though chiefly in a very different sense from this—that it 'profiteth little.' We do not join in that flattery of flesh and bone, that worship of muscle and sinew, that idolatry of strength and agility, which has been carried, we think, much too far in our Schools and Universities. We must be bold to speak of it, if we are Christians—nay, if we are rational beings—in terms more measured and less exalted. The highest height of bodily prowess is essentially lower than the humblest developement of intellectual strength. And the loftiest flight of intellectual ambition never rises into the very lowest heaven of spiritual grace. These are gradations, not of man's making, but of God's ordaining. Soul first, then mind, last body. Do not expect—for it is impossible—to rearrange for yourself the primeval law, to invert the everlasting order, of the material, the mental, and the spiritual. Do not allow yourself to live as if you could do so. God has settled these things: we must judge, and we must act, accordingly. We cannot admit that either Universities or Schools exist for the sake of games; and still less that that later age, that maturer manhood, in which (if anywhere) man must be served and God honoured below, can devote to sports of the field—and be blameless—its 'life and breath and all things.'

But, though this is true, and the remembrance of it urgent, it is to a different peril that I would turn your thoughts now. Better any diligence than any sloth. Better the 'strenuous idleness' of bodily exercise than the sluggish purposeless lounging which is the alternative for many. Not even that absorption of the faculties in corporeal energy, not even that devotion of precious hours to interests which 'perish with the using,' is so fatal to faith as the stagnation of all the powers in a dull monotonous idling. The one may be excessive, may be irrational, may be the postponing of higher objects to lower, may be (so far) a dereliction of duty, a forgetfulness of the future, a blindness to the invisible and the everlasting: but it does not so unstring the mind, it does not so drug and paralyze the whole being, as that other habit, of doing nothing, thinking nothing, and caring for nothing, which is as hopeless in prospect as it is fruitless and objectless in the present. The man of activity may find his scope and even his mission hereafter in the great world-wide work-field. Ill would it have been for us, in the Crimean war, in the Indian mutiny, if we had had no soldiers and no civilians whose youth had been disciplined in games, whose courage and whose endurance had been practised in the hunting-field. Soul ranks above mind, and mind above the body: but lowest of all in the scale of human existence—in brute animal life there is no such specimen—is that man who does *nothing* in acknowledgment of the creation gift; whose eye is not only bounded by the horizon of time, but closed, absolutely closed, to every interest of his being.

Do you ask why this meanest of all sloths should be

called a foe particularly of faith? I will answer, without hesitation, First, because it is expectant of nothing. I might say of it, as of Unreality before, that it is not only one opponent, it is the very opposite, of faith—for faith is active expectation, and sloth is indolent contentment. And secondly, because this kind of sloth is peculiarly friendly to vices which are murderers of faith. These men are the plague-spots of society: in low life they fill its gaols—in higher life they secretly stain our very 'feasts of charity.'

2. But I will go a step onward, and urge the charge 'that ye be not slothful' upon minds also.

It is undeniable that there are even in our homes of learning—even amongst those who must be described, by courtesy at least, as scholars and students—a vast number of unoccupied minds. There are men who take no interest (to use the conventional though far too respectful phrase) in the studies of the place. It is difficult to see how this excuse, if such it ever was, can be admissible now. Surely it is a tradition of the past, rather than a suggestion of the present. It comes down to us from a time when there was in this University but one recognized line of study, but one system of instruction and one possibility of reward, and when it might happen that there was such a natural inaptitude, so absolute an incapacity, for the cultivation of that one, as drove a man altogether out of the only course marked out for intellectual effort. Who can say this now? Who that is not born incapable of thought can be at a loss in these days to find in this place a career and a goal? I would most earnestly charge it upon my younger and my youngest hearers to-day, that they

allow themselves in no such plea for sloth. The man who can find no interest in the studies of this place has himself only to blame for it. Let each one, whose line of study is not yet definitely chosen, choose his line instantly. Let him take counsel upon it—with himself at least, always the best of counsellors if there be first but an honest mind—and let this very week witness the desired obedience in him to the apostolical charge, that, in mind at least, we be not slothful.

But there is a sluggishness of mind oftentimes even in those who are not absolutely standing idle.

For example, there is in almost all of us a proneness to inattention. The eye passes over the line, reaches the foot of the page, arrives in due course at the end of chapter and volume—and nothing remains of it. Of all the reproaches which arise against a man in his chamber of study there is none more bitter than these two—the sight of his own books unread, and the sight of his own books read. The one accuses him of waste, the other accuses him of inattention. We are slothful in not reading—we are slothful also in reading. I would beg you to grapple with the demon of indolence betimes in this form of inattention. Examine yourself in your reading. Make each book, each page, each sentence, give account of itself to you. This which your University does for you in her place, do also—you can better do it—in yours.

Again, there is in most men a habit too of desultoriness. We see it in the day, and we see it in the life. Some have spent one year or two years in this place, and they have not yet resolved upon their line of study. They know not in which, or whether in any, of the

recognized branches they will seek honours. Thus they miss all in asking which. And so in details. From book to book, from subject to subject, from one study and from one accomplishment to another, we are still passing and repassing, and there is nothing done, and nothing gained, in any. 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'

Once more, still speaking of mind, there is a general dreaminess and listlessness and vagueness yet more common perhaps than either of the former. Sometimes health has to do with it. And yet even health is more under a man's control than we like to believe it. A little wilfulness in habits and hours, in such small things as diet, sleep, and exercise, will make a man an invalid whom God never made so, and whom God must reprove and visit and judge for being so. And even excess in study will account for this. A man cannot fix his thought, cannot concentrate his effort, from mere extravagance of labour, or from mere superfluity of anxiety—in other words, from want of wisdom or want of faith—and so he is 'slothful in business' just from over-business—just because he has not been (in the Christian sense) 'fervent' also 'in spirit, serving the Lord.'

3. Let us turn then—as these last words counsel us—to that kind of indolence of which the Apostle actually wrote the warning, 'That ye be not slothful.'

It is true, each man is one, not many. We may divide, for the sake of distinctness, this total which is the man—we have scriptural authority for doing so—into two, or into three, parts: but we must not forget that the living, thinking, moving person is one and the same through all these, and if sloth acts in one part

it acts in all, and acts in the unit being of which each part is an aspect. If the body is slothful, the man is slothful; and if the mind is slothful, the man is slothful: and that will be our answer to any one who should object that neither body nor mind have to do with faith. But let us come now to that of which there can be no question—the action of sloth in the soul—that is, in the unit being in its direct aspect towards God.

(1) And here we shall observe it first in its dealing with divine truth.

There ought to be no doubt that Revelation is not given to save a man trouble. If it be true that in matters of life 'man's extremity is God's opportunity,' so in matters of knowledge it is true likewise that, where man ends, God begins. Man can think, and God would have him think: man can reason and ponder and reflect and exercise judgment, and God would have him do each one of these things in regard to truth spiritual, eternal, and divine. If Revelation came to supersede effort—to make it needless, wrong, presumptuous, to use God's natural gift of thought upon God's supernatural gift of enlightenment from above—Revelation itself would lose one sure mark of its origin and one chief object of its coming. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' No—but, if God declares Himself, it is to show me how to search so that I may find. The knowledge of God is not a science, but an acquaintanceship: it is not the knowledge of a book, it is the knowledge of a Person. And that knowledge presupposes toil and patience and progress, a setting out and an arrival, all the more, not the less, because God has vouchsafed to

give it for our direction. Thus of all impediments to spiritual knowledge none is greater than sloth. The entrance of sloth into religion is fatal even to the reception of truth.

Watch it in its influence.

It makes one man a bigot. If it is not necessary, if it is not safe, to think—if Revelation was given as a solid lump of doctrine, to be laid up in the napkin of an indolent assent, or used as a missile against infidels, or brought out at set times, on Sundays and holy days, for parade or ornament—let me take it on trust from the family in which I was born, or the sect or the party into which disposition or accident has thrown me, and let me count it a mark rather of attainment than of irreligion to be confident in my interpretation of its meaning, and vehement in my denunciation of all who differently read it. This is the very history of religious partizanship. One man, taught of God or untaught, ponders and meditates, at last speaks and writes: his thought, his conclusion, is taken on trust by thousands, who just call themselves by his name, and follow, or think they follow, where he leads or led. It is sloth which really marshals the ranks, and turns the thoughtful utterance of one into the senseless violent gabble of the many.

It makes another man a sceptic. We do far too much honour to doubt when we dignify it by the title of free-thinking. Certainly there are those who have reasoned themselves into unbelief; as there are those who have through much learning, truly or falsely so called, confused and hopelessly entangled an intellect never perhaps the clearest. But of this I am assured—that, for one man who disbelieves the Gospel through overmuch

thinking, thousands and tens of thousands doubt about it through the precipitancy of indolence. Sloth loves suspense. Not to reject the Gospel—for this might alarm; not to call myself an infidel—for this still requires some courage; but to leave all doubtful, to recognize the certainty of nothing, to lay no result by in the storehouse of conviction, and to treat no principle as established beyond the reach of assault—this is the counsel of sloth in reference to all truth: and when you point to this man and that man, of taste, of eloquence, of intellect, who has never given in his adhesion to the Gospel of Christ, I shall still think that in matters of the soul indolence may have been his counsellor, and that he who was diligent in business and sagacious in politics may yet have been sluggish in answering the greater question, 'What must I do to be saved?'

And certainly, if these are the effects of indolence in its more marked and definable workings, there is an influence which it exerts day by day, in reference to the reception of divine truth, in the hearts of all who are compassed with human infirmity. We read in this Epistle of a 'dulness of hearing'—but it is the same word (in the original) as that on which the text turns—a 'slothfulness,' or 'sluggishness, of ear'—which makes men unfit to enter into the deeper mysteries of Scripture and the Gospel. Which of us knows not something of that deadening by sloth of the spiritual ear? Where in us is that quickness, that alertness, that alacrity in catching the sound of God's voice in the Bible, which was never so touchingly expressed as in that answer put by the old man into the child's mouth at Shiloh,

'Speak, Lord: for thy servant heareth?' What record, what disclosure, what command, what expostulation of Scripture does not come to us clouded and dimmed and muffled and stifled, rather as the muttering echo of a far-off thunder than as the articulate speech of a Person dealing with us and conversing with us from an opened heaven? This too is of sloth. We do not arise and bestir ourselves—we do not go forth, like patriarchs and prophets of old, to stand under the open sky and 'hearken what God the Lord shall say concerning us'—we sit still at home, and expect the word to come to us, ready labelled for use, legibly directed for application—we treat it as a dead letter, and expect it to turn itself for us by sleight or magic into a living voice—when, in reality, the change which must pass upon it is a change in ourselves, and he who would find God in his Bible must begin by seeking Him in his soul.

(2) And thus we have passed by a natural, an almost imperceptible transition, from the province of thought to the province of devotion, from the reception of divine truth to the exercise of divine communion. And need we spend words or moments in showing to any one how indolence acts day by day in this truest and deepest part of the life—that which has a direct relation to God Himself? What is it which, as a simple literal fact, keeps many young men, and many active and vigorous and (in other respects) not self-indulgent men, from beginning each day with an earnest, thoughtful, deliberate act of self-dedication and devotion? Shall we be afraid to name it by its name in this house of God's worship? Shall we not say plainly, It is sloth—'dull sloth'—sloth in its meanest, poorest, most corporeal

aspect—we suffer ourselves to sleep on when we should be waking, and leave no room for God between the infirmity of the flesh and the importunity of the world?

But the spirit of indolence, in this form of indevotion, is not expelled even by worship. Who does not vex himself with the miserable experience, not now of that sloth which prevents, but of that sloth which spoils prayer? What other occupation of life is gone through with the languor, with the drowsiness, with the half-attention, with the divided distracted thought, which besets the act of praying? 'I will arise,' one said, 'and go to my Father:' we 'arise' not—we 'go' not: we say rather, 'I will sit still, and see whether God will come to me: it matters not—I will pay my paltry due of worship, and, if nothing comes of it, I shall be blameless.' And nothing does come of it. The prayer so prayed asked nothing—and God, who is spirit, saw nothing, heard nothing, recognized nothing, in it. 'There is none,' the prophet says, 'that calleth upon Thy name'—why? Because there is none, he adds, 'that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee.' Prayer, true prayer, requires more of effort, more of exertion, than any other act of the life: every other has something to assist it; the mere presence, the mere scene, the mere object, helps the doing: in prayer, there is nothing to aid; everything is against it: the pressure of things seen, the atmosphere of earth and sense surrounding, all fight against that speaking to the Invisible: unbelief prompts the thought, 'There is no one listening:' sloth weighs down the arm that should be lifted, and says, 'It is in vain—let alone—see whether some answer may not come without the asking.' Therefore the expression is not one whit too

strong, 'that stirreth up himself,' as you would rouse a smouldering fire, or waken a man from that sleep which is death's brother, not merely to approach, not merely to address, but actually, with the strong hand of the soul, 'to take hold of Thee.' This is that soul's effort of which the Old Testament tells, in mysterious type and shadow, when the way-worn patriarch, left alone by the brook, wrestled all the night long with an unknown Person, to whom he said, after all those lingering hours, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' This is that agony of mental struggle, of which the garden of Gethsemane, on the night of the Passion, witnessed the divine example; and of which that Master's latest-born apostle wrote to one of his churches, 'I would that ye knew'—it would give you an idea of my love, not otherwise to be gained—'what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea'—and not for these alone, but even 'for all those who have not seen my face in the flesh.' Over such prayers as these the demon of indolence had no power. God give us all grace, my brethren, ourselves to 'go and do likewise.' Let us, in this sense, become 'followers of those who through faith and patience' fought the good fight before us, and conquered. Depend upon it, there is one sign which has ever marked the true heir of salvation; and that is, earnestness in praying. All else may have varied: one man has shown one grace, or one kind and class of Christian graces, and another another; one has fallen short in this perfection, and another in that; one has been burdened with this infirmity, and another with that: but I do not believe that there is one occupant, at this moment, of the Paradise of God unseen, of whom

this could not be said, 'He was a man of prayer.' Sloth assailed him, and sin assailed him, and Satan assailed him, not least but most of all when he prayed: he knew what it was to shrink from the effort, he knew what it was to feel that 'wrestling' which alone 'prevails' difficult, severe, daunting to flesh and blood: but he knew also that to such wrestling alone heaven at last opens, that through such wrestling alone heaven is at last won; and therefore he persevered day by day, and God gave him the victory: of him it was true, on the whole—or he had not been where he is—that he 'always prayed and never fainted.'

(3) Finally, as in the regions of thought and of worship, so also in that region which the context specially contemplates, the region of Christian action, there is a special warfare to be waged with the spirit of sloth.

'God is not unrighteous,' so runs the passage, 'to forget your work and labour of love. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence unto the end. That ye be not slothful.' It is thus, by a diligent earnest continuance in well-doing—in other words, in a life of active charity—that the departed saints are to be imitated.

It might seem as though I were forgetting the peculiar circumstances of the congregation when I seek to give prominence to this particular topic to-day. Last Sunday you were invited to an act of almsgiving: to-day it is not so. And, apart from some direct object of that kind, it may not be evident at first sight what can be the practical bearing of a call from this pulpit to a life of charity. Shall I be thought to exaggerate if I

venture to say that I know of no audience to which such a call could be more appropriate? It is not only that you run some special risks of forgetting it: it is not only that your life in this place is proverbially prone to selfishness: it is not only that a double strength of Christian resolution is needed to make you, at this age and in these circumstances, that which yet you must be if you would ever hear the glad summons, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father—for I was in distress, and ye ministered to me.' It is not only the difficulty of the duty which proves its urgency: nor yet the certainty that in some future stage of your life, the very next stage to this, you *must* enter upon a work of unselfish well-doing if you would be Christians: far, far more than this. I am going to assert that here, if anywhere, a life of charity is possible, and that here, if anywhere, the evil spirit of sloth is busy to preclude it.

I speak not only, though I would ever speak with respect and sympathy, of those direct efforts in behalf of Christ and Christ's Gospel, of Christ and Christ's poor, of Christ and Christ's little ones, which are ever counteracting—never more than now—the more selfish and antichristian influences of a life and a society like ours. I speak not of these only or chiefly. And yet I would, in passing, bear my testimony to the blessed rebound and reaction of good upon characters thus disciplined in the University for serving God afterwards in their generation. I would recall with grateful affection names once known here in connection with these youthful enterprises of charity, and made illustrious afterwards in the Church by a maturer devotion, at home and abroad, to the cause of truth and the service of mankind: and I

would venture to ask some of those who now, in their stead, fill these galleries, whether they might not, more of them, bethink themselves of some parish school or parish district in this town to which they might offer a spare hour, on Sunday or week-day, for the benefit of others and for their own; learning practically betimes what is the condition, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, of that world into which God has brought them—in which will lie, for a life-time, their work and their duty and their suffering—and drawing down, upon their own studies, and upon their own brighter and more joyous existence, a blessing not of earth but of heaven.

But even this exhausts not the capabilities for good, the special capabilities, of a life in this place of education. If the spirit of charity be in you, it will never want a work. Glorious things have been done here in secret, without once stepping forth, even in the cause of charity, into the outer world which surrounds us. Sicknesses of mind, and sicknesses of body—sharp, sudden, trying emergencies of suffering—come here, as they come everywhere on this earth of sin and the fall; and often there is none to minister on the instant but a friend. Happy he, whose heart is so attuned and so disciplined by faith and love, by constant self-control and habitual self-denial, that he may be ready at once with the word of wisdom and the act of kindness—ready to sacrifice rest, exercise, study, health itself, to minister, through long nights and days, to the sin-stricken conscience or beside the bed of sickness and death.

These special calls are of necessity rare and ex-

ceptional: but not by these alone are the offices of charity bounded. Where is he, for example, who has not some one amongst his own friends, of whose spiritual or moral wellbeing he cannot as a Christian feel himself assured—some one perhaps whom he knew in other days, at school, or at home; some one whom friends or relations have requested him to notice, ignorant, it may be, of the dispositions of either, or of the mutual fitness of the two; some one whom he sees (as the expressive phrase is) to be going on ill, living wastefully, idly, or worse yet, and whom it is both easy to shake off and not easy to attract or help? Surely such experiences are common, as of old time: and I bid you to apply to them the counsels of the text. Enter with serious thought into the character, into the disposition, into the faults and trials, of the person thus brought nigh to you. Despise him not—for God made him. Despair not of him—for for him Christ died. Set before you, as a definite object, his improvement, his progress, his soul's health. Pray for him, watch over him, influence him as God enables. Where is the world so full of such opportunities as this is? Where else, where in later life, will you find yourself so placed as here, within reach of other lives and other souls, still tender with youth, still ductile and pliable to the touch of friendship, brought nigh to you not by official duty but by community of circumstances? Seize, I pray you, while it is yours, the flying moment. 'Buy up,' as St Paul expresses it, 'the opportunity'—the one, the momentous opportunity—remembering always that time is short and that 'the days are evil.'

And if ever, in this as in all else, the evil spirit of

indolence should whisper to you, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' if sloth should bid you think of yourself, your own ease, your own amusement, your own interest, your own profiting, and not another's—then think of all those who before you have thus been tempted, and yet by God's grace have conquered—those who, in the successive generations of this University, have here 'exercised themselves unto godliness,' and gone forth, one by one, into the struggles of an ampler yet scarcely more trying arena, the stronger and the better and the wiser for having here proved the strength and practised the wielding of the weapons of God's armour—think of these, and pray for grace to keep the apostle's charge ever before you—

'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.'

VIII.

IRREVERENCE.

Hebrews v. 7.

And was heard in that He feared.

'WAS heard,' the Greek text says, 'from His reverence.' The word expresses that spirit of caution or scrupulosity with which a man takes into his hand an object of peculiar value or sacredness—fearing to spoil, fearing to desecrate. As a substantive, it occurs once only besides in the New Testament, and is there rendered by our translators 'godly fear[1].' 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' But the adjective and the verb are of less rare occurrence. Simeon is described as 'just and devout:' the word is the same—'reverent.' 'Devout (reverent) men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.' In the catalogue of the men of faith in this Epistle Noah is described as 'moved with fear,' with a feeling of devout reverence, to prepare his ark, whereby he 'became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' In the Septuagint the same word is used, in some signal passages, as the rendering, I believe, of two Hebrew verbs conveying the several ideas of 'trembling' and of 'silence.' 'Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God'—'trembled,'

[1] [The text of the Revised Version changes the place of the word, and the rendering of it in that altered place is 'reverence.']

St Stephen says, with a more exact regard perhaps to the original, 'and durst not behold.' And thus God Himself expostulates with His rebellious people in the Book of Jeremiah. 'Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?' And the prophets Habakkuk and Zechariah are interpreted by the same word in the Septuagint Version, when they say, the one, 'But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him'—and the other, 'Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation.'

These examples give some additional force and fulness to the thought here presented, 'And was heard from His reverence;' heard by reason of that spirit of awe, which trembles, and which keeps silence, where God is; which made the eastern exile put off his shoes when God spake with him; which made the psalmist himself write, as though in express contradiction to his own act in handing over his inspired song to the chief musician, 'Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Sion.' The deepest praise of all is a silence too: even as the profoundest prayer is that which breathes itself in 'unuttered groanings,' the very voice of God's Spirit, 'heard in that it feared.'

We have not touched yet the most memorable thing in this brief text; that the person spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is He who 'in the days of His flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death,' and it is He who 'was heard by reason of His reverence.'

We can scarcely fail to see in this verse an allusion

to the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. At all events, that was an instance—a chief, a crowning instance—of the thing spoken of. Does any dull prosaic mind raise the objection, 'Christ was not saved from death—Christ, on that occasion, was not heard?' It is a striking example of our manner of reading God's Word, and of our manner of interpreting God's dealing. Is there no answer to prayer but the literal? Is there no hearing of prayer but that which just tamely puts into the hand the very thing asked? Is there no answering by contraries, and yet answering the more completely? Is there no 'saving out of death,' which was not a 'saving from death?' no 'strengthening with strength in the soul,' far more blessed, and far more glorious, than the mere excusing from suffering? All these questions—and yet one more—must be pondered before we presume to say that the text was not written of Gethsemane.

I say, 'and yet one more.' For indeed it may be doubted whether the prayer of Christ our Lord in the garden was a prayer for deliverance from the cross; was, in other words, an outburst of human shrinking from pain and shame and mortal extremity, of which at least we should have to say that it was at variance with all else that we read concerning Him—for calmly and uncomplainingly, and with solemn longings also, He had set before His disciples, as before Himself, the necessity of that end, and the glory thus only to be attained both by Him and them; whether it was not rather against the blackness of a spiritual darkness, against the crushing weight upon the soul of the burden of a world's sins, separating Him then, as afterwards

upon the cross, from that blessedness of conscious communion with the Father which had been His stay and solace heretofore—whether, I say, this was not the 'cup,' this the 'hour,' for the 'passing' of which Christ prayed, and whether it did not pass, for the time at least, when there came that conscious, that visible answer of which St Luke tells, 'There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.' 'He was heard in that He feared.'

These are mysteries too deep for us, straggling, tottering, sin-laden souls, to expect to penetrate. We will leave them in their solemn recesses, and turn to one other, the last remaining, preliminary to our designed application of the text to-day—which is, the enquiry, How are such words as these to be understood of the divine Lord? how can we reconcile them with that revelation, upon which the availableness of the cross itself is suspended, the oneness of the Son with the Father, the true divinity—let us use the plain word, the proper deity—of Him who died for us and rose again? 'He was heard for His reverence.' 'He learned obedience,' the next verse says, 'by the things which He suffered.'

We can grasp each half of the Christian verity; we can apprehend the Godhead, we can comprehend the Manhood: but we cannot put them together; we cannot frame into one whole the parts of which our faith is made up. Be it so. We could almost say that it was thus with inspired men. We read in this same Epistle of a Person 'by whom God made the worlds'—what is that but an act of deity? We read of a Person who 'upholds all things by the word of His power'—what is He by whose agency creation itself—including time

and space, extension and duration, sun, moon, and stars, worlds seen and unseen, systems, our own and other, of orderly movement and inconceivable vastness—was called into existence, and is hourly, daily, annually, perennially, maintained in existence—what is He, let us know, but God, very God? We have no third term by which to designate Him. Omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, existence before time, universal agency, the keystone and condition of all being—what is this but God? We know not of degrees of deity: that which has these properties, that which exercises these powers, *is* deity: it is our idea, it is almost our definition—were it reverent to define—of God Himself. Therefore I say there is no doubt who and what this Person is of whom it is written, in words now before us, that 'He was heard for His reverence.' God give us all grace to hold fast this faith—these two parts of the faith, if we cannot as yet piece them into each other—the humanity and the deity, the *Ecce Homo* and the *Ecce Deus*, out of which, in their combination, springs the faith of saints, when they say, in the adorations of time and eternity, 'My Lord and my God.' Of this Person it is here written, that 'He was heard in that He feared.' For He too, for the sake of us men and of our salvation, condescended to give, in human flesh, an exact pattern of the perfect man; so that we, we who live in times nearer or more distant, even to the end of all time, might know 'how to walk so as to please God;' even by becoming like Him, in spirit and life, who did truly divest Himself, by a miracle of self-sacrifice, of the exercise of the attributes of an inalienable deity, and did consent to live upon earth,

through childhood, youth and manhood, as a prophet and a minister and a sufferer too, as though He were only a man perfectly inspired and indwelt of the Holy Ghost. Of Him it is written that His prayer below—most of all, His latest prayer, His prayer of anguish and agony—was 'heard because of His reverence.'

We are speaking in these sermons of the Foes of Faith; of those tendencies and inclinations of the fallen nature—we might even go further, and call them—St Paul, certainly, would have called them—those workings and influences of a personal spirit of evil—which are directly antagonistic in us to the life of faith. We have spoken of a spirit of Unreality, making profession unmeaning, and carrying a practical falsehood into truth itself: we have spoken of a spirit of Indolence, relaxing the very sinews of the spiritual being, and making thought and worship and conduct alike vague and desultory and purposeless: to-day we have another foe in view—it is the spirit of Irreverence.

And nothing seemed so likely to shame us into self-reproach and self-abasement concerning it as the contrast presented in the text by the example of Christ Himself. He, 'equal to the Father as touching His Godhead'—He who, even on earth, was still, as to His divine nature, 'in heaven, in the bosom of the Father'—yet, when He prayed, 'was heard in that He feared.' What are we, that we should stand upright, when our divine Lord Himself not only 'kneeled down,' but even 'fell on the ground,' before that God with whom He was one—His soul 'sorrowful unto death' beneath that load of a world's sin which the world itself carries so lightly and fears not?

The spirit of Irreverence. What is it? Whence comes it? And how, under God, shall we cast it out?

1. We have seen what reverence is: we have seen it in Christ. We know then its opposite. Irreverence is the *not* fearing, the *not* being awed into silence, the *not* bending the knee of the soul before Him 'in whom we live and move and have our being.' And we see this evil spirit everywhere. We have seen it in the open profaneness of the scoffer at holy things. We have seen it in the insolent defiance of the 'busy mocker' who asks, 'Who is the Lord?' and 'where is the promise of His coming?' We have heard it in the light jesting quotation, of words, either sacred, or nothing. We have heard it in the wicked horrible oath; in the appeal, on occasions trivial and trifling, to One who, if He is, must judge. We have seen it, alas, in the actual profanation of our churches, of our college chapels, to purposes of shameless levity—or worse things yet—in the very hearing of words of revelation, in the very performance of acts of worship. This is irreverence let loose and running riot.

If this were all, I would not speak of it here. This audience shudders at the very mention of atrocities like these in the churches and in the universities of Christian England. And yet this congregation itself feels, if it listens, if it reflects, that it too knows something of this foe of faith; knows it in the secret of the soul, if not—as we trust not—in the utterance of the lips.

Where indeed is the spirit of irreverence not working? in which of all us? in what part, in what act, of any one of us?

We can trace it, if we will look steadily for it, in the

lurking-dens of the heart, 'in the chambers of the imagery.' Every movement of the mind, concerning Providence, concerning duty, concerning Revelation, is an irreverence if God is not remembered in it.

Who has not cherished thoughts of discontent and murmuring in regard to his place in life and his adaptation to it? Yes, I know well what are the thoughts of many young men as to their rank and circumstances, as to their talents and prospects, as to their gifts of look and manner, as to their acceptance with friends and strangers—as to deeper things than these, their disposition and temperament—their proneness to this particular vice, their sluggishness towards this special virtue. In all these things there is in all hearts a tendency to say to the Creator Himself, 'Why hast Thou made me,' or why hast Thou placed me, 'thus?'

And if we pass from irreverence concerning the original moulding and ordering of this being to irreverence as to that which befalls it; when we see how those who are dependent upon God for every thing presume to call in question His dealings and His providences—to find fault with this event and that condition, with disappointments and defeats and losses and sicknesses and deaths which they must feel, if they reflect at all, to come straight and direct from the hand of God; when we not only see these things, but feel them ourselves at the heart's core—find ourselves, when we are tried, just as unbelieving, as undutiful, as refractory, as the worst—ever questioning, complaining, repining, all but blaspheming, so soon as the will is thwarted in the smallest matter; I know we must say that it is impossible for us to cast the first stone: we can but lay

the hand upon the mouth, and confess ourselves irreverent with the vilest.

Or if, yet once more, we track our own footsteps into the divine presence-chamber, and notice how we—for I speak now of us all—deal with God Himself in what He says to us and in what we say to Him—in other words, in the two matters of faith and worship; I am persuaded that here too we shall have to confess the power over us of this same wicked spirit: we shall find that the very idea of 'sitting at Jesus' feet to hear His word,' of receiving information as true because He gives it, of bending the mind and the heart to the receptivity of the little child—and are not these things due, if God vouchsafes to teach?—is lost, is exploded, is almost ridiculed, in the mind within us: other notions have cast it out, so that now we neither have, nor yet miss, this primary condition of divine instruction—this reverent devout answer of the thrice-summoned understanding, 'Speak, Lord: for Thy servant heareth.'

And if we speak to God, as we profess to do when we pray, what is the posture, what is the attitude, of the heart nominally drawing nigh? Where is that sense of an auditor, that consciousness of a presence, without which the whole thing is nugatory, or worse? Where is that 'coming' as to a 'throne of grace,' where is that 'drawing near with a true heart,' where is that heart-service, as contrasted with the service of the lips, of which, not Scripture only, but conscience tells, as the first preliminary to an act of real devotion? And where is that self-recollection as to the subjects and topics of the particular address, that summing up of the wants, and that carrying of them as real things to a real

Person actually present and certainly listening, without which, if there may possibly be adoration, there cannot be petition, and for lack of which we are silenced instantly when Christ comes to us with His grave, calm, searching question, 'What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?'

We will not pursue the same question in its application to the perseverance or the persistency of our worship. We will not ask how much of any one public service is gone through at the full stretch of devotion, or how many thousands and tens of thousands of wandering thoughts cross the mind in the course of it to confuse and spoil and ruin the act of professed communion with Him in whose sight earthly things are only so far significant as they may help or hinder the safe arrival of the imperilled man in the home and sanctuary which is to be his rest for ever. All these are of the same spirit of irreverence which is our subject to-day: all are proofs of the manner in which we have departed in this latter day of the Church from the primitive model; from the example, above all, of Him, our divine Master, of whom it is written that 'He offered up His supplications with strong crying and tears, and was heard for His reverence—was heard in that He feared.'

The first step towards recovery is the knowledge of disease. And I think that we may assume, on the part of all who hear to-day, their sympathy in the misery, in the shamefulness, of the condition described. Many even of our younger hearers feel themselves already lonely and desolate by reason of this unconsciousness of God's presence, which may be taken as the definition of irreverence. There are times doubtless—hours of

each day, longer periods too of a life as yet untroubled and prosperous—during which the unconsciousness of God as a Person living and present may be borne without uneasiness; nay, may even be a relief from immediate fear and pain. But I am equally certain that to have no one, when you do suffer, to whom you can instantly have recourse for sympathy—to have no one, when you do want comfort, to go to on the instant for solace—is a great misery, a wretchedness above words. And I venture to think that no one's day even now can be quite happy if it cannot be begun with the express benediction of a heavenly Father; and that no one's night even now can seem quite restful if it cannot be committed, consciously and expressly, to the charge and safe-keeping of a Friend who neither sleeps nor slumbers; and that no one, feeling it, as most men feel it, right and needful to worship, can really like to kneel down beside his bed and not feel that he speaks to any one, or to come forth to a church service and not know by any sign within that he has reached God's house, or that his prayers and praises go anywhere, or can by possibility draw down upon a thirsty spirit and a barren life the dew and the sunshine of a personal, a divine love. I say that irreverence is a misery even now. And what will it be? What when old age comes, when sorrow, when loss, when sickness, when death? 'What will ye do in the end thereof?' Who would not then give all that earth has, of possession or promise, if it might but be said of him, as of the divine Master before him, 'He was heard in that He feared?'

2. Deeply impressed with this experience of the workings of irreverence in every part and particular of

our being, we shall all ask ourselves, Whence comes it? How is it that a creature, owing everything to the Creator, can by possibility fall into this condition of forgetfulness, of unconsciousness of Him, which is so full of misery and wretchedness? And some answers might be given, true, but insufficient.

One might say, 'It is because I was compelled to worship. Before mind or thought could be exercised upon it, I was made to bend the knee and to say the words of an utterly unrealized, an absolutely unintelligible devotion. I was not asked what I knew or what I believed: I was taken to church—I was made to pray. What could such prayer amount to? And now, when I am a man, I am still, by the rules of this place, constrained, not on Sundays only but on weekdays also, to take part, by no choice of mine, in a form of worship presupposing faith and making no small demand upon individual devotion. It is this which fosters, if it did not create in me, a spirit of irreverence. Leave me free, let me worship when I will, force not utterances which to me are conventional: this is only to preclude, by forestalling, that which, to be worth anything, must be from the heart; leave me free, and I shall be more likely to attain to that which certainly I shall not attain thus.'

This is the language possibly of some hearts to-day. We understand, though we admit not, the plea. It is a difficult question, this, of what is disagreeably called compulsory worship. Several points have to be considered. How many, we might ask, would worship at all if all were free? How many, we might ask still more reasonably, have cause to be thankful that their worship is encouraged, is fostered, is rendered unosten-

tatious and unhypocritical, by being thus made a law and a rule? Are there not some who, beginning by obedience, end by love? Are there not some who would not come, yet, coming, learn to pray? Can we forget in this place one, afterwards a master in our Israel, who owed conversion itself, under God, not to compulsory worship alone, but even—such were the times—to compulsory communion? He who was brought to his first convictions of sin and salvation through an academical rule which (in that form) few would justify may at least be quoted as an example of what honesty and resolution can do in bringing good out of disadvantageous circumstances, and may encourage some who are now struggling with unequal steps after him to grapple like him with their difficulties in the name and strength of One who is 'the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.'

But indeed, my brethren, none of you supposes that these things are, or make, the real obstacle to that spirit of reverence of which the text speaks. These things are the mere shell and husk of an evil which lies deeper and is of the soul.

It is easy to tell of some particular influences which assist, if they do not create, this irreverence of which we are speaking.

The first of these is levity. 'They made light of it,' says the Gospel. 'Made light' of the king's invitation, of the Gospel call. 'Made light,' we will venture to read the saying, of every thing. There was nothing which they could not twist into a subject for jesting. Not the purest, most sacred affection; not the deepest, the most sincere conviction; not the noblest, the most

self-forgetting devotion. It is the fashion of the times, far beyond any other times of which history or literature keeps the record, to seek amusement in human infirmity. That, perhaps, is not new, strictly interpreted: human weaknesses have always afforded laughter to the playful and sarcasm to the cynic: the new thing is, to find something ridiculous in human suffering, human feeling, human piety, human life. Nothing is left, even to the young, for admiration pure and simple: all good is either ridiculous, or hypocritical, equally and alike. How can a man go from such reading, from such conversation, from such views of life, and fall on his face instantly before the purity and before the wisdom and before the love of Almighty God? The heart of reverence has died out in him—he is no believer in verities, he is a scoffer at the good, at the beautiful, at the true.

And a second ingredient in irreverence is vanity. A man must be humble who would be devout. The ancient prophet, the ancient lawgiver, the ancient psalmist, lay low before his God, because he first felt himself poor and vile and naked. Nothing is more marvellous than the humility of those saints. Men whose shoes' latchet modern thought and modern genius is not worthy to loose—men whose prayers and whose hymns are the heirloom of the ages, and whose names are held in honour where intermediate existences are obliterated—they could revere, because they were destitute of self-conceit: they could humble themselves before God, because they first knew and felt themselves to be nothing. How is it now? Thousands and tens of thousands of puniest intellects, of men not worthy to be named, I do not say among inspired writers,

whether of history or psalmody or prophecy, but not even amongst the third-rate or the tenth-rate thinkers of this age or of any, are yet presuming to sit in judgment upon God and God's Word, as to what He ought to do and it to be, and refusing to take one step towards a firm faith or a manful confession until they can explain to their own satisfaction every mystery, and put a rational gloss upon every revelation, of the Gospel. The first condition of reverence is humility: where this is not, vainly shall we look for the prayer, vainly for the acceptance, of Him who 'was heard in that He feared.'

And is it indeed too much to ask of man that he should be humble? to bid him who knows that he neither made himself, nor can sustain himself in being, nor can shield himself from one fracture or one paralysis or one fever, nor can answer one single question fully as to the mechanism of his own frame or the causation of his own perceptions, nor can tell you one single thing, out of his own philosophy, concerning that which was in the beginning or shall be in the eternity which is to come—to humble himself, alike in thought and in worship, before One who holds him 'in the hollow of His hand,' and certainly must have arranged with absolute authority the time and the place and each circumstance of his being?

A third of these counteractions of reverence is excitement. Excitement is of all kinds and all degrees; from that lowest and most brutal which touches mind through body, and rouses into unnatural activity powers which eventually it is to drug into idiotcy, up to that which has for its subject the political interests of a nation, and too often, at a season like the present, makes

men estimate characters and state facts and judge of motives not according to truth, not by rules of justice and judgment, but by the bearing of each upon certain ends which they have proposed to themselves as either important to society, or as conducive in some way to a party triumph in which they are to have a share. Hence many results upon which a thoughtful observer looks with concern: not least an idolatry, a deification, of objects which a Christian knows to be at the best earth-bounded and temporal: not least a shutting out, for the time, of those higher and highest contemplations without which there can be no place in any for divine reverence, for godly fear.

My brethren, I have not yet touched that one higher spring out of which all these turbid waters flow, and without the mention of which the briefest analysis of irreverence would be utterly incomplete and deceptive. We must speak of it plainly, as the Word of God bids us: it is the alienation of the fallen from the God of their life and the God of their satisfaction: it is the repugnance which is in all of us by nature to a close dealing with Him from whom we have broken loose: it is that mingled fear and shame and enmity which settles down upon the heart of the sinner, and of which the record of the first sinner's experience gives us the token and the parable, when it describes him, after he has broken the commandment, as 'hiding himself from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.' That hiding was the devil's counterfeit (so to say) of reverence; all that the sinner, impenitent and unforgiven, can know of it; just a shrinking away, timorous and blindfold, from a face and a voice which

is still, could he but know it, the sinner's only rest and only healing.

3. Such is one of those foes with which faith, the sight of the invisible, the consciousness of God, the soul's divine vision, must daily and hourly battle in such as would be saved. How it militates against faith must be obvious to every one. It would be idle repetition to show it. Rather let us spend a few latest moments to-day in suggesting one or two practical counsels as to the manner in which faith must combat irreverence. Let us speak them with all plainness. The battle is one of detail: it is only by attention to particulars that it can be won.

Be reverent, then, first, in worship. How difficult this is, we have seen, we have felt. But he who would not be a profane man must be reverent at least in worship. When if not then? then, when we are gone actually to meet God—then, when we are actually speaking to Him, asking for things, declaring this and that as our knowledge of Him, our feeling towards Him, our desire concerning Him—when, if not then? Surely that irreverence which can trifle with God in worship is an irreverence inexcusable and double-dyed: alas, is it not also, God being the witness, the commonest of all, and the least conscious?

Be reverent, secondly, in speech. It is bad to have bad thoughts: it is worse to utter them. Worse, because then they infect others. Worse, because then they use speech, which is man's 'glory,' for the very purpose of doing God dishonour. Worse, because then they fix and stereotype themselves (so to say) upon the man—no longer darts and brands injected by the great foe,

only lying for a moment within before we seize and eject them, but rather weapons of our own, taken by us and used and wielded for our own purposes, as parts of ourselves. Not for nothing, be we well assured, did our Lord utter the memorable, the half-paradoxical saying, It is 'the things which come out that defile the man.' The things which come out must be his own. There can be no doubt as to the ownership and proprietorship of these. Therefore we say, with all earnestness, Guard your speech from irreverence. If a witty thought occurs to you, and you long to utter it; if the freedom of delightful conversation stimulates within you the power of mirth and the power of jesting, and you complain of the stiffness and dulness of being evermore fenced and guarded when you are amongst friends; still, if there be in the repartee one fragment of a parodied text, or in the story that you would tell one profane expression, refrain: as you love reverence, refrain. This is that abstinence which is better than fasting, that self-control which sobers and which disciplines: such self-denials, small as they may be in themselves, by degrees make *men*, Christian men—able to go forth to mightier exploits in the strength of an armour, a divine panoply, which in these little things, in these youthful days, they have already proved and found sufficient. 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'

Be reverent, finally, in thought. There is a grace which we sometimes fear is dying out—could any grace quite die out—in the Church of this latter day; and that is the grace of meditation. Saints of old 'kept things and pondered them in their heart:' saints now,

if saints there be, talk of things and dissipate them with their lips. Where is he amongst us who knows what it is to meditate—to commune with his own heart concerning God and Christ, concerning life and death, concerning truth and eternity—to 'commune with his own heart in his chamber, and be still?' But it is out of such communing that reverence springs; the worship of reverence, and the speech of reverence, and the soul of reverence too. Without it there is no root in our religion: the growth is all outward: the world scorches it: 'in the time of temptation it falls away.' Without it there may be forms, there may be ceremonies, there may even be throes and paroxysms of devotion: but there will be no steady, even, wholesome developement —'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear'—such as marked the lives of Christian people in generations now passed or passing away. There is no exercise of mind and heart so difficult, none so rewarding. That counting over in the soul the treasures of grace—that profound research into the mind and will and work of God as He has revealed it to us in the word 'written for our learning'—that secret sacred intercourse, as of a man with his friend, with the unseen and invisible One, whom to know, whom to love, whom at last to dwell with, is eternal life—this, this is devotion. He who goes forth from this exercise into the world of business, into the world of society, into the world of literary, scientific, political, ecclesiastical activity, goes forth to remember God—goes forth (it is the other half of duty) to remind of God. Of that divine converse, as it is written of the lawgiver of old, he carries forth upon the very countenance an impress and a

memorial: 'the skin of his face shone because God had talked with him.' Such be our ambition, such our effort, such, in God's measure, our attainment also. Thus in one and in another, as the record of a life is written in eternity, shall the blessed words come at last to be verified, in faint reflection of an unapproachable glory—

'He was heard in that he feared.'

IX.

WISDOM BUILDING AND FOLLY PLUCKING DOWN.

Proverbs xiv. 1.

Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

TWO persons are here before us—two characters, two employments, and two results.

We might have found a text of like import from the New Testament, and told in St Paul's words, how deeply it concerns us all to be 'not unwise, but understanding what the will of God is'—to 'walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.'

But the two halves of God's Word form one whole: each fits into, completes, explains each: backward and forward through both circulates the life-blood of truth and grace: Christ is all and in all: the ancient lawgiver 'chose the reproach of Christ,' when he refused 'the treasures of Egypt:' it is written of the supernatural rock which supplied the desert-thirst of Israel, that 'that rock was Christ.'

The Book before us is practical. Precept and exhortation, maxim of sagacity and aphorism of wisdom, this is what we find in it: we look not here for revelation strictly so called, but we do look, and not vainly,

for that inspiration, which seldom rises higher and never appeals more forcibly to the conscience of mankind than when it utters that 'prophetic strain' which is the latest attainment of an 'old experience.' The Book of Proverbs does not claim more for itself than the use of thirty centuries will concede to it, when it 'speaks to us as unto children,' and says, 'My son, let not these things depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble: when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.'

Many of these proverbs demand study—look unintelligible—seem to be of the earth—may be read in two ways: in some degree perhaps this is so with the text. Its first aspect, its more commonplace and prosaic sense, might be this: wisdom succeeds, and folly fails, in the long run of life, certainly of posterity: wisdom builds, and folly destroys, the home and household and habitation. It would thus become like the perverted (not the real) saying of St Paul, 'Godliness has the promise of the life that now is;' as though a man had only to be good and he will be fortunate; as though God's children were to be known from other men in this life for their exceptional successes, honours, and triumphs. St Paul meant doubtless that godliness has not to wait entirely for death and the grave to enjoy its blessing, but possesses even in this life that peace passing understanding, that peace with God, with the conscience, and with the world, which is the 'shadow cast before' of an everlasting peace in the home which hath foundations.

In like manner we will read the text in its somewhat deeper yet not less literal meaning, and make it say this to us: There is a house to be built—a divine Architect has designed it, and two rival builders are competing for its erection. Wisdom is one of these—that believing foresight, that serious earnestness, that spirit of progress, which looks ever to God, and which God has blessed. Folly is the other—that imprudent improvidence, that volatile frivolity, that spirit of standing still and looking back, which never did an honest day's work on God's earth, and which ever leaves that earth in the curse of its threatened thorns and thistles. If wisdom's tender be accepted, if wisdom takes the contract, the house will be built. The plan will be adhered to, the materials will be substantial, skill will second toil, and tier by tier, and story by story, the building will grow, surely if not swiftly, towards the headstone. If, on the contrary, folly's loud boasting, fallacious promise, and wily bidding be successful, she will but take her tools to destroy: she may seem to be busy—at times there may be a pretence of getting on and going forward—but, on the whole, and when the matter is judged by results, you will find that she has not been building but demolishing: even the thing once done comes to be undone: on the whole, in the long run, you will find, in each instance, the proverb verified, 'Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.'

If you ask what God and the Word of God mean by wisdom and folly—what St Paul meant by the two words when he wrote, 'not as fools but as wise'—what our Lord meant when he said, 'The children of this

world are in their generation wiser than the children of light'—the answer will embrace three particulars. On the side of wisdom these: forethought, earnestness, perseverance. On the side of folly, in like manner, these: improvidence, irresolution, and unsteadiness.

A man might foresee clearly, and not set himself to provide. A man might go to work eagerly, and not keep to it. Forethought is not wisdom unless it be earnest to act, and earnestness is not wisdom unless it be constant. To foresee ought to be to provide, and to put the hand to the plough ought to be not to look back. Wisdom, in the Scripture sense, has these three characteristics: and folly, in the Scripture sense, is then complete when it lacks all.

Corresponding to these three qualities of the builder are the three conditions of building. To build, you must have a plan. To begin to build without drawing a design would in earthly things be ridiculous. Next, and most obviously, building requires toil. The plan will not execute itself. The hand must work out what the head originates. Thirdly, the proof of the building is growth. Not suddenly, yet surely—not by unaccountable strides, but step by step—the walls rise, and the roof is framed, and the edifice is completed for habitation: this is the course and order of building, corresponding with the qualities and characteristics of the builder—the plan implying forethought, the work earnestness, and the growth perseverance: wisdom builds the house, because these are her qualities; folly plucks it down, because she has them not.

We have spoken of the competing builders, and of the act of building or plucking down. What now is the house?

It would be a sufficient and a scriptural answer, if we replied briefly, The house spoken of is the man. The word 'edification,' whenever it occurs in Scripture, involves this metaphor. To edify is to build up. And when St Paul speaks, for example, of a person 'edifying himself,' or else 'edifying the church'—when he speaks of 'things wherewith one may edify another,' or desires that 'all things be done unto edifying'—he says, in effect, that each man, each congregation, the Church collectively, is a house; a house in process of building, a house which may still, in each case, either be built or pulled down: he reminds us, almost in words, that, as Christian wisdom builds her house, so folly, even (were the phrase permissible) Christian folly, may pluck it down with her hands. It would be enough to say that the house spoken of is the man; the individual man, or else the corporate and the collective.

But it may serve to give distinctness to the solemn warning of the text, if I bid you look at some two or three houses which each one of us is, professedly at least, engaged in building.

1. And, first, there is the house of the mind.

If there be one thing special in this particular congregation, it is this—it is an assembly, by duty and office, of mind-builders. This University has undertaken to build up minds. These galleries are crowded with young men who are here for the purpose of edifying, of building up, their minds for every good and high use for which a mind has been given us of God. I hope and believe that there is not one man amongst them all, present here before God, who does not seriously recognize this as the particular thing which he has come

to the University to do. Other things have their place and their use: we disparage not either that 'bodily exercise' which is 'profitable for a little,' or that social intercourse which refreshes and stimulates life, or any one of those lawful recreations which in due subordination have each their place and their blessing. But we earnestly, we cannot too earnestly, remind you that what you are come hither to do is to build; and that the house which you are come to build is the house of the mind. For other things you might have gone elsewhere—some things you might have accomplished anywhere: the reason why you are here is this, Your minds are in building, and here you can find for that responsible building alike the architectural design, the necessary material, and the fostering help required.

The first requisite of all building is the plan. We may say that the University undertakes to furnish the design. There was a time when this University built all its houses on one plan. For a long succession of years, years of great honour and usefulness, Cambridge subjected all her sons to a mathematical training. This was her idea of the way to build minds. It was a narrow idea—granted: but it was a manly, a robust, and, so far as it went, a thorough training. Great men were made either by it, under it, or (if so you will have it) in spite of it. The mighty men of one honoured profession were in large preponderance its pupils. By degrees, yet slowly and tentatively, other studies crept in. One great college always set classics and metaphysics side by side with mathematics in her latest and highest examination. Presently classical prizes, classical scholarships, at last a classical tripos, occupied the

attention of one fourth, one third, ultimately (I suppose) almost one half, of her students. Of late the extension has been wider and ampler still. Every science, every study that can make any remotest pretension to the title of a science, has its *curriculum* open to it in this University.

It would ill become me to express either opinion or caution upon a subject which occupies the regard of the leaders of education in this place—men at once responsible and experienced. I only allude to the facts, because I would show their bearing upon the topic before us. The University no longer builds on one design but on many. In the same degree does it shift upon its members a responsibility of selection which once was her own. Each young man who enters the University has now something to do even with the plan of his building. He has to choose for himself in which line of study he will find his work and his attainment. Even here he is not left without counsel. Previous instruction, earlier education, the bent of the disposition, the prerogative of school, aids him in the choice. Nevertheless a choice it is: and it sometimes happens, not only that an unwise choice is made, but that much precious time is wasted in making it, and sometimes a vacillating backward step is taken, later in the career, confessing rather than repairing an original error of judgment.

Nevertheless, my brethren, forget not that it is the bounden duty of each one to build on some plan, and to begin to build early. We can make no allowance for the loss of a year, or the sacrifice of a term, in merely looking around in hesitancy and indecision. Still less can we justify the intending builder in wasting precious

time in the idle pleasure of feeling himself free—free from school compulsions, free to make or to mar his new liberty as he will. If a plan is the first condition of building, toil, honest toil, is the second; and perseverance, brave and stedfast, is the third and the most decisive.

I need not tell any one here present how in this department wisdom builds; or how, in the house of the mind, folly may pluck down with her hands. We have seen examples of both, neither rare nor exceptional. We have seen, on the one hand, that judicious choice of the main study, that earnest yet temperate addiction to it, that stedfast daily perseverance in spite of difficulties, discouragements, and disadvantages too, which have again and again, in their combination, brought a success more than proportioned to the original material of talent. We have seen men of no shining gifts, by the exercise of sense and diligence and tenacity of purpose, raised to a point of knowledge and ability which cleverer men may affect to disparage yet can scarcely fail in their hearts to envy. We have seen, on the other hand, miserable instances—it is no affectation to call them so—of folly plucking down. We have seen a young man enter this University with considerable repute brought from his school—with some soundness of training and some acquirements of scholarship—we have seen him, through a silly vanity fancying itself to have attained, or an affectation of facility more fatal than dulness, or a mere desultory sauntering through the pleasant paths of dissipation and trifling, gradually lose, little by little, even that which he had; each examination serving as a mile-post of the retrogression, and the end revealing, to every eye but his own, the

shame and disgrace of the deterioration. Days have been suffered to slip by, unused, unobserved, unconfessed, unrepented of—each day of neglect the parent of another, till term and vacation, residence and degree, are lost in one chaos of confusion, bewildering to the eye which looks out over it towards a future. Depend upon it, my brethren, this sort of waste has a remorse and a retribution, from which an older man, if his entreaties could avail anything, would fain save his young brothers. A day will come when you will be wishing that you knew anything—when you would gladly cut off the right hand, might you but win back by that sacrifice the very power to acquire knowledge. But, alas, while wisdom beside you was surely building her house, folly within you was plucking hers down with her hands.

2. There is a house, too, of the life. And I speak now of life as lived here below, without carrying your thought onward into the invisible and eternal.

Every one of us has a life—the most weighty word, the most mysterious possession, the most responsible charge.

It is well that we should sometimes—and it cannot be done too early—force ourselves to take into view this life of ours as one whole.

We know not indeed beforehand its length, measured by years; but our Lord Himself teaches us that years do not make the completeness of a lifetime: the man who lives to fourscore years, and the boy cut off in first promise, has equally, in God's sight, had his day, his full day of twelve hours, though, when a mechanical calculator computes them, the component hour of the one life was longer by ten times or twenty times than that of the other. For these unknown possibilities the builder,

the architect too, of the life must of course lay his account: but it is not in these accidents that 'men live,' not 'in these things is the life of their spirit.' The house built on wisdom's plan is a complete house for all its diminutive size as man judges: we may forecast, we may plan, we may work, we may build—whether for thirty years or for eighty, it shall be indifferent—and wisdom, alike in her design and in her execution, shall be justified, alike and equally, of her children.

It is well that you should expand your view betimes beyond the confines of this scene, into that maturer and maturest manhood for which at present you are preparing. I would counsel every young man to make choice early of his profession. The profession is, so to say, the design of that house which is the life. By it he is to maintain the outward life. By it he is to build up his home. In it he is to exercise the faculties of his nature, and to use the attainments of his education. In it he is to glorify God and to do good in his generation. Therefore it is a matter almost of life and death to make choice, amongst many possibilities, of the work which shall fill his lifetime. Wisdom will forecast, even in these things, the plan of her future.

Yet is this choice, my brethren, but a small matter, in comparison with the preparation. You are sowing now for a reaping even in time. Every act now done is forming a habit: there are habits of mind, we know, of thought and judgment, of desire and imagination, as well as of conduct; and each habit, according as it is wise or foolish, right or wrong, good or evil, must be either your friend or your tyrant, your helper or your tormentor, in the lifetime which is to follow.

I would not be an alarmist, still less an exaggerater, in these matters: I know that God is almighty to break for us even the chain of tyrant habit, and set free the slave of sin into the glorious liberty of His children. But these changes are the wrenches and violences of grace: they come not to every man: they come not to thousands and tens of thousands who yet are watering their pillow night by night with tears of bitter, of fruitless remorse. None but a fool or a madman will count upon them—shaping his course in one direction, if peradventure one of God's mighty strong winds, from the east or from the west, may force his life's vessel hereafter into another. Wisdom builds, on a plan, with earnestness, with perseverance; so begins to build as she would wish to finish.

Wisdom builds—builds from the first—and folly plucks down with her hands.

Who does not profess to wish that his life may be honourable and of good report both with God and man? Who does not profess to wish that he at all events—whatever fortune may do against him, or rivalry, or malignity of others—he at all events may be guiltless of undermining his own prosperity? Who, amongst the youthful tenants of these galleries, would not shudder at the thought of bringing misery upon his own, shame upon the mother that bare him? And yet, my brethren, it is no matter of course that such a future of life is for none of us. We stand here at 'the spring of the waters,' ere they have finally taken their start for this ocean or that. To-day the heart is tender, and the inclination right, and the intention (God grant it) pure, and—happiest of all if it be so—the prayer fervent to the

throne of grace for the guiding hand and the preventing, accompanying, following Spirit. Yet none of these things guarantee the house of the life from a disastrous standstill, from a ruinous demolition. We have seen all these things—certainly all save one of them—present in early days in a man afterwards infamous. There have been men of mark, of culture, of genius, men born in Christian homes, admired and loved in their school and in their college, with the world at their feet, and the way level before them towards this triumph or that: yet inasmuch as over their building folly not wisdom has presided—because they suffered sloth or temper or passion to ensnare them—because they planned not, toiled not, endured not—because at last they neither feared God nor regarded man—they have made havoc of every gift and flung away every opportunity; shame, crime, misery, suicide itself, have reversed and obliterated the hope of their beginning: wisdom would have built the house of life, but they chose the tender of folly, and folly plucked it down with her own hands.

3. We should have missed the very point of the text if we did not briefly add one further illustration, and see, finally, in the house spoken of, the house of the everlasting hope.

Every one must have some idea—even the atheist is not without it—of the state after death. There is a peradventure of immortality even in him. But what manner of immortality? When you reflect upon the differences between life and life—between your own life in pain or remorse, and your own life as it is in comfort and repose—you feel at once that it is not enough to be: it is nothing to be able to prove that probability is

on the whole in favour of an everlasting existence, unless you also know something of the nature of that existence —of its joys and sorrows, its companionships and its occupations.

Have you so much as settled the plan of this house of the hope? What is your idea of the thing to be built? You cannot set to work upon it until you have the design. What do you purpose to be when you die? On what footing do you intend to face the judgment? What plea shall you urge for yourself at the bar of God?

Until this is settled you can do nothing. Wisdom will not aid you unless you will trust her. She bids you settle with yourself, first of all, the great preliminary —shall you rely for acceptance, for future happiness, for everlasting life, upon that which you are or by that time may have made yourself? Shall you say then, as thousands are saying now, I have not sinned like this malefactor or that, I have done no wrong, I have defrauded no man? Shall you say, I have decently filled my place, I have done a few easy kindnesses, I have scattered a few costless pence, I have worshipped week by week where Christians gathered? Shall you say, I drifted down the river, I took each day as it came, I accepted what was given me, I made enjoyment worship, and contentment godliness—absorb me, O God, if there be a God, into the sum of being, into the ocean of the universal life? Or will you, will you, say, as the Christian faith bids you, 'A sinner, and the chief of sinners, I put my whole trust in the sinner's Friend—in Him who took upon Him, being God, to deliver man—and, being God, must know what was needed—and, being God,

must have done that which He enterprised—on Him, on Him alone, I fix my hope—He, He, is my Saviour—God be merciful to me a sinner?'

Then, if this be so, there is a design; the house of the everlasting hope has its plan. Wisdom, satisfied thus far, would next set thee on thy work. How wilt thou build on this foundation?

Evidently there is no excuse from working, in this mighty, this magnificent reliance. Christ came not to make thee indolent, selfish, sinful; to open to thee a gratuitous heaven, suddenly to be entered, with soiled foot, roving or earth-bound eye, defiled mind and impure heart. This were no heaven: this were some sensual, wicked, devil-like paradise, earth over again in all save its useful activities and bracing enterprises. Christ has bidden thee work: the house of the everlasting hope demands energy in its builder.

Life itself is not long enough to do the thing set thee: to bring every thought into obedience; to make God thy one object; to recommend Christ, by pureness and meekness and love unfeigned, to a generation; above all, to become absolutely pure in heart, capable therefore of the beatific sight of the Invisible One.

This is thy work if thou be a Christian. Let wisdom build, and she shall also finish.

But O saddest, most pitiable sight—folly plucking down, as wisdom builds. This too we have seen, not once only. We have seen early instruction, we have seen a childhood spent (like that of the sons of Eli) in the very court and precinct of the sanctuary, we have seen a ready-made but unrealized faith, we have seen forms and habits of prayer and devotion, passing on, in

the next stage of life, into a barren memory, a bare name, of lost belief: we have seen such a man, familiar with each text and phrase of holy Scripture, able to turn each one, with playful versatility, to the purposes of oratory or jesting—so versed in each argument of the believer that none has any longer for him either persuasion or offence—he has long laid each aside as either self-evident or else insoluble, one equally with the other destitute of the salt of conviction, of the balm of comfort. He has lived thus—and, so far as we know, he has died thus—knowing too much, knowing too little; the husk and shell of divine truth his, the kernel and life of it never tasted, loved never. Wisdom was not suffered to build, though the plan perhaps was studied or dreamed over: folly seized the tools, and plucked down with her hands even the stones that were laid.

My brethren, let us not trifle thus with the house of the great hope. Let us lay deep the foundation, than which no man can really lay any other. Let us, like Nehemiah's workmen, with one of our hands build, and with the other hand hold a weapon. Let us seize earnestly, let us hold tenaciously, any fragment of divine truth which conscience attests and the soul can echo: let us piece each to each, with a new realization, until the whole stands out at last in its breadth and in its satisfaction: at the end of all, God Himself shall consciously enter, and fill the house of our soul's hope with the glorious illumination of His presence.

There remains yet one word, to connect the subject of discourse with the object of charity.

For the fourth time in the course of eight years I am

to bespeak your alms for the maintenance of spiritual ministrations in the destitute suburbs of Cambridge. There is no cause which I could advocate with more confidence. It appeals to every feeling of our nature and every principle of our Christianity. Certainly there is no place on this earth where ignorance of the first elements of God's truth could be less tolerable, more offensive, than at the doors of this great University. If the light of this place be darkness—if, that is, the light which is so bright within have no reflection, no expansion, at the distance of one street from its centre—how great, how intense, is that darkness. Well may we fear its reaction upon the society, upon the community, upon the church, which permits it. You will not permit it. I see with regret that the annual almsgiving on this occasion is most variable and precarious, fluctuating between £38 and (if my memory serves me) all but £100. How can any organization maintain itself which is liable to these ebbs and flows? My brethren, such offerings as these ought not to depend, for abundance or scarcity, upon the accident of the preacher. They are matters for principle rather than for excitement. They ought to flow equally from thankful hearts, to whosesoever hands the trust of calling for them be committed. I dare to ask you to let this be one of the years, not of scarcity, but of plenty. What would it cost the members of this great congregation to furnish by their bounty this day the whole stipend, for one year, of one Curate? Let the call be heard and let it be answered. Its emphasis you cannot evade. It ought to lie upon the conscience of this congregation to see that a proximity, not perhaps always without a danger of its own, to

this great centre of England's young vitality be at least able to secure this—that no yard and no lane, no home and no heart, within one mile of Cambridge, be unvisited, unwarned, uncheered, uncomforted, by the feet of them who bring the glad tidings of an everlasting rest and peace.

My brethren, our church of England is at this time on her trial in this great critical matter of wisdom and folly. She too has her house to build, and the time was when she seemed almost to have made her contract with folly. How was a church to build herself a sure home on the only spot worth occupying—the heart of England's people—which was satisfied to drone forth its weekly discourses within the four walls of an edifice, comfortless, damp, and repulsive, where the poor man felt himself unwelcome, and the rich man sat alone 'in a good place;' to enjoy revenues, meant for God's service, in a selfish vain-confidence, glorying in the name of churchman, and looking down with disdain upon what was often a most unwilling nonconformity? How was such a church doing her part towards 'occupying' her mighty talent, the trust of God's goodness for the edifying and comforting of His people? Surely the marvel is, not that that church should be threatened, but how it should have survived.

Those days are past or swiftly passing. In time, we will hope, to save her from the utter 'plucking down' of which the text speaks, our church has aroused herself to invoke the aid of wisdom. She is now building her house; and in proportion as she so builds, she is mighty and shall yet prevail. There is an affection for her deep down in English hearts, which may be latent or

dormant in her selfish prosperity, but which will be fanned into a vigorous flame by her reawakening to newness of life. When she sets herself, as she is now doing, after the example of her great Lord, to seek and to save, by personal effort, that which was lost—to carry her sweet message into disconsolate souls, searching them out by personal ministry that she may heal and bless—then she will find her walls rising again, if it be 'in troublous times:' the Lord whom she earnestly seeks will come again to His temple, and God's offering shall once more be acceptable to Him, offered by holy hands and consecrated by self-devoted lives.

X.

READINESS.

Ephesians vi. 15.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

St Paul from his Roman prison is looking forth upon all time and two eternities. Nowhere is his view so entirely free as in this queen of epistles. Whatever the reason, he is free even from personal memories. He stays not to recall what must have been a more than commonly populous retrospect. That three years' stay at Ephesus, longer probably than any other (save perhaps at Tarsus and Antioch) since he became a Christian, is treated here as if it were forgotten. Like the twelve, like the seventy, in the trial-missions of the days of Christ's flesh, he is so full of his message that he can 'salute no man by the way.' The absence of personal reminiscences has led some critics in all times to conclude that the epistle could not be for Ephesus. It was an inference hasty in many ways. The salutations in St Paul's letters are by no means proportioned to his intimacy with his correspondents. The epistles to the Corinthians, amongst whom he had spent a year and six months, are destitute of them. The epistle to the Romans, a church which he had not then visited, is full of them. It is evidently a fallacious test and an unsound criticism. The epistle to the

Colossians, accompanying this, and containing one passage which seems to say (though it does not really say) that he had never seen them, has half a chapter of greetings. It is certainly noticeable, but only this, that the sister epistle, that before us, is perfectly general, with one single exception, from the first line to the latest. It may be, according to one plausible hypothesis, that it was a circular letter, intended for several churches, and therefore designedly left impersonal. There may have been a blank in the first verse, to be variously filled up or left blank. Yet in the parallel epistle, expressly directed to be read in other churches besides that to which it is addressed, no such scruple operates. The salutation of Archippus, the commendation of Onesimus, is no bar to the transmission of the letter to Laodicea, or to its public reading in the house of Nymphas. We must look somewhat deeper for the cause of the phenomenon. We have here an Epistle (if I might use the expression) charged and saturated with inspiration. In this one instance 'the sword of the Lord' is scarcely 'the sword of Gideon.' The human element is here almost lost in the divine. I know scarcely one book of holy Scripture which in this respect rivals it. If all Scripture had been like this, there would have been room for a theory of inspiration which (as it is) needs modification. Not only is a man full of the Holy Ghost writing—that is true everywhere—but he is writing as such and such alone. He scarcely touches the earth which he illuminates. He is lost in the mysteries of the unseen, and testifies by that absorption to the supremacy of things divine. His eye explores the eternity in which the Creator dwelt

alone, and gathers strength for conflict and martyrdom from those inscrutable counsels which took note of things and beings that were not, wrote indelible names in a book of life, and drew the boundary lines of future existences of which every moment and every circumstance was as clearly foreseen and as minutely predestined as though ages and generations had not to run their round before the first foundation of the first of them should be laid in time.

You can estimate, from this faintest sketch of the opening verses of the epistle, the improbability (if I might so speak) of there being one local allusion or one personal greeting in the latest. When St Paul descends at last from 'the holy mount' of his more than apocalyptic intuition, it is but to tell how these divine determinations were realized and wrought out in time; how the election became a calling, and the calling a sealing, and the sealing a possession, and the possession a glory; how the Christ of predestination became the Christ of incarnation, and the Christ of humiliation, and the Christ of resurrection, and the Christ of ascension, and the Christ of dominion, and the Christ of 'headship over all things to the church;' how the dead in sins are quickened and raised and exalted already in Him—lifted into a new life, re-made for a paradise not of manual but of spiritual culture, brought back from an exile of estrangement and godlessness into a home of reconciliation and communion—yea, forming, themselves, a holy and magnificent temple, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, and God, through eternal ages, God in the Spirit, the light and the presence.

What room in such an epistle for reminiscences and associations of earth? What place, we almost feel, for images and metaphors, temples of Diana, wonders of the world, amidst unearthly scenes and bodies celestial? We seem to be conscious, as we read this one letter, of a sort of reluctance to descend even to what is commonly called the practical. The word, I know, is inaccurate. Nothing is so practical as the spiritual. Nothing touches the spring of conduct like doctrine—if by 'doctrine' we understand God revealing Himself to what this epistle calls 'the eyes of the heart.' But, adopting the distinction, we say that St Paul finds here an unusual difficulty in turning to the practical. In the third chapter he tries to do so, and fails. 'For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'—he is going to say, 'beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' A whole chapter intervenes. Again he loses himself in matters deeper and higher; rises once more into a region divine; extricates himself through prayer and praise, and resumes at last in the fourth chapter the interrupted and suspended application. Even now it is but to enunciate principles, themselves running up again into mystery. This is what makes the epistle before us so dear, so precious, to the Christian. This is what makes it the model of the evangelist and the directory of the pastor. It is a standing protest in the churches against that dull, dry, dismal detail of duties, against that morality falsely so called, under which the church of England, for example, through the eighteenth century languished, slumbered, and sinned. St Paul knew that out of the heart are the issues of the life; and if he discoursed

upon duty, if he discoursed upon the relation of wives and husbands, of masters and slaves, he so spake as to make each a wellspring of revelation, bringing Christ into all, and kindling into a sacrifice of living devotion each act and each circumstance of the mortal being.

All this he has done. With the coupling-chain on his arm—with the rude rough Prætorian, some Thracian perhaps or Illyrian, the companion perforce of his prayers and his exhortations—he has dictated thus far to his amanuensis these words of life and godliness: and now the 'finally' is come. From his prison at Rome he will equip the soldier of all time. How far he is influenced in the choice of his figures by the neighbourhood of the camp or the presence of the soldier, we presume not to say; remembering that in earlier days and other scenes he had (more lightly and briefly) sketched the same parallel in writing to Thessalonica. The passage has been read to-day throughout Christendom as the epistle for the one and twentieth Sunday after Trinity; and I have chosen from it one clause for your meditation on this opening Sunday, full of hopes and responsibilities, of the academical year, earnestly praying that God may write it upon many of these hearts, and make it the motto from this day forth of many a young life, here taking its decisive colour and impress for a manhood of action and an immortality of consequence.

'And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.'

The girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, all would be incomplete without the

sandal of preparation. We read in Scripture of 'rough places;' we read in Scripture of 'slippery places:' there are both of these on the great battle-field which is the world. If we would 'withstand in the evil day,' if we would 'stand, having done all,' we must complete the equipment with the sandal of preparation.

The word 'preparation' is ambiguous: the ἑτοιμασία of the Greek is not so. It occurs only here in the New Testament, and has some slight varieties of sense in the Old. But there is ample authority for the interpretation which I would give to it to-day. 'Preparation' is 'readiness.' The charge is, that we have the feet shod with the 'preparedness,' the 'readiness,' of the Gospel of peace.

'Ethelred the Unready' is the well-remembered title of one chapter of English story. It might be the title of many lives as God and man read them. It was not that there was a conscious deliberate purpose to betray the cause of patriotism or religion, of truth or right, of the Church or the Gospel. The Ethelreds are of course against the Dane. In one sense, it is the worse. A thirty-five years' reign was just the mischievousness of the Unready. When he dies, there will be a better man. He stops the way. And yet he is there. He has a right to his life, and he has a right to his throne. It is scarcely a parable, brethren—it is the very case itself still.

The illustrations would be endless, if we were not helped by the context to narrow them. The scene is laid, not in still life, but in a battle. We have but to think therefore of our own lives in their aspect of conflict. And we speak, of course, of spiritual conflict;

of that sort of struggle which we only incur by being Christians. What is this but the very life to which we were pledged at our baptism—'manfully to fight under Christ's banner'—'to continue Christ's faithful soldier unto the life's end?' I know how easy it is to evade this warfare. I know how far smoother it seems to render a man's life, to forget altogether this pledge, this 'sacramentum,' and believe himself only, always, everywhere, among friends. I know how courtesy and complaisance and charity and even humility may be turned to account in this direction; how it may be made almost a duty to gloss over differences, and round off angularities, and presuppose agreements, and make allowance for imperfections, and hope the good and refuse to see the evil—till at last the very idea of conflict is exterminated and eradicated from the life. And God forbid that we should be quick-sighted to a brother's failings, and blind to Christ's 'image and superscription' stamped indelibly, however faintly discernible, upon each precious spiritual coin once minted in His treasury. It is the very keenness of this consciousness of the ownership which makes us strong and earnest in combating that which would deface it. It is because we see Christ's purchase, it is because we see one of God's spirits, inside each body; encased and enshrined in each most frail, most imperfect, most sinful life, which meets us on earth's common trivial highway—it is therefore that we would wrestle with the spirit-hosts of evil which have occupied and desolated it. We know that what God speaks of is always the reality. No kingcraft or priestcraft, no Gregory or Constantine, can stay by change of name

or form the internecine strife, earth-wide and age-long, between good and evil. It lies deeper than national conversions or European reformations. It rages still, in hearts and lives. And though the blessing of even a nominal Christendom is above gold and precious stone, it does but leave where it was the spiritual strife and the individual responsibility: it does but render more obscure, more perplexed, more difficult, the personal warfare, because it gives added force to the burning words of St Paul, 'We wrestle, not against flesh and blood.'

You see then the double risk, in this complication of the struggle, of that unreadiness which is our subject. The separate encounters, of which the life's sum is the defeat or victory of the Christian, are generally unexpected, sudden, and impalpable. They come to us, not so much in the form of open sinners, bitter scoffers, or avowed infidels, warning us off by their look, or sounding the alarm by their utterance. They come to us, not like the profligates in the Proverbs, saying, 'Let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent—cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse:' on the contrary, so far as the persons of our warfare are concerned, they are men like us, or better than we; full of kindly sentiment, full of knowledge and ability, men whom it is pleasant to meet, honourable to know. And to stand aloof as though either our faith or our conduct gave us the advantage over them, to treat them with suspicion, to read them moral lectures, to reprove them for carelessness or heterodoxy, to wear armour in their presence as though they were our enemies, would be

not only a misery but a folly and a presumption, destroying the hope of profiting them, and dishonouring by the very spirit and temper the cause and Gospel of the Saviour. And yet, my brethren, from this very converse we return home again and again conscious that we have practically betrayed or denied Him. In our hearing, soldiers of Christ as we call ourselves, words were spoken, principles were avowed, judgments were passed, acts were estimated, not in accordance with Christ's rules, nay, on suppositions, tacit yet evident, which would have made His cross and His crown alike superfluous and nugatory. We sat by, not with the excuse (itself insufficient) of mortal terror, of imminent martyrdom, if we should say the word for Christ; no, in security, in calm, in indifference; or, if not that, then in awkward irresolution, in the surprise of unpreparedness; because we expected no such trial, because we never thought that that sort of thing was the Christian conflict, because we took it for granted that society was recreation, because we would not spoil an enjoyment, our own or another's, by what we called to ourselves 'dragging in religion.' Yes, but, to go a little deeper, for this other and truer reason, because we had omitted to prepare ourselves for all risks by a habit and temper of watchfulness; because we had refused to listen betimes to St Paul's counsel before us, 'Stand therefore—having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' Therefore we lost our opportunity. The word of quiet, firm, self-controlled correction was not in time to be spoken. In conversation there are 'no footsteps backward.' The stream hastens by, and in vain do we watch on

the brink for the 'sacred waters' to 'flow upward.' Meet emblem of the fugitiveness of all opportunity! Solemn memento of the responsibility of circumstance! Awful warning, too, of that which shall be the retrospect of a life's unreadiness; the harvest past, the summer ended, and we ourselves unsaved!

There is another aspect of the precept, which suggests itself forcibly before this audience.

We would not exaggerate—it is foolish as well as wrong to do so—the special perils of our generation. We cannot compare. We see but the present. Past and future are alike and equally out of our ken. But we must be blind and deaf and stupid if we do not take account of the positive. We hear, we read, we know, that there is a shaking of faiths, an unsettlement of foundations, existing and extending itself, in reference to matters lying yet deeper than our very Christianity; such elements and rudiments, for example, of religion, as the possibility of prayer, the immateriality of the soul, and the personality of God Himself. And we know also that on the side of this advanced scepticism men appeal confidently to what they call science; loudly proclaiming the incompatibility of proved and incontrovertible fact and law with the most fundamental principles of (at all events) revealed religion.

You will not imagine that I am proposing to enter into such questions to-day. We are assembled in this house of prayer on the basis and presupposition not of religion only but of revelation. As a Christian I speak to you: as Christians you listen. Evidences, whether of miracle or prophecy, whether of Christian morals

or Christian character, whether of the suitableness of the Gospel to man's want, or of the perfection, in life and mind, of Him who is the Gospel, appear to me to be more properly unfolded in books or lectures, where there is no risk of disturbing or distressing worshippers whose faith is stedfast.

My purpose is different. I would seize the moment which is given me to urge upon you the risk of unreadiness in reference to these gigantic battles of our generation. You are here with one single object: to make preparation. Before you lies an unexplored, an inscrutable future. You may succeed or fail in your ambitions; you may be famous or obscure in your generation; you may be happy or sorrowful in your home; you may die late or early: these things none can forecast. But as your day will most surely have in God's sight its twelve hours in full tale; as every life is in God's sight complete; as character and influence and destiny will unquestionably shape themselves, and He, the Judge of all, will be able to write infallibly on your gravestone, 'He did good,' or 'He did evil;' so amongst other things, nay, as the root of all, you will have a mind, one way or the other, concerning truth and faith and the Gospel. If not for Christ on the whole, on the whole you will be against Him. This is what each man can contribute—his own conviction, his own influence, his own life—to the sum of the Christian evidences. It is a serious thought, a great responsibility. Now there is no doubt that the whole weight of some men is lost by their unreadiness. They are so ill educated that they simply go for nothing in the great battle. Their arguments for revelation are

the mere sputterings of rage and fear. They tell against, not for the truth; men smile at them, pity them, and pass them by. How different with those who have indeed 'shod' themselves for the fight. How noble the ambition, here proposed to you in the name of Christ—older men envy you as they exhort—to make yourselves wise in all this world's learning; to enter with all earnestness of self-devotion into the mysteries of nature and of existence; to be quite sure—and therefore absolutely fearless in your search—that truth and *the* truth must be at one; that nature, which is God's common working, cannot really contradict miracle, which is God's exceptional yet not less orderly working; that science can be perilous (in a religious sense) only to the irreligious; that to the man who will take God with him in his search God will reveal Himself, for the satisfaction of his own soul, and for the reassurance and reconciliation (it may be) of other seekers who but for him might have floundered into atheism. O for a few earnest hearts—and such there are, I doubt not, I know, in this congregation—who shall take this for their province; so to trust, and doubt not, the fidelity of their God as to give themselves to track His footsteps in earth and sea and sky, in plan and law and system and providence, on purpose that they may be ready to grapple with the arrogances of a 'science falsely so called,' and both to reanimate the doubting and to convict and confute the gainsayers.

This University has been fertile in such intellects; men who have brought science herself to God's footstool and made her bend a willing knee to Him who gave her at once her implements and her subjects.

They pass to the grave, one by one; scarce one or two of the giants of Cambridge philosophy lingering still in the loved precincts where first they fearlessly studied, and afterwards as fearlessly illustrated, the wonderful works of God. They pass to their rest, clamoured down already by new strifes of tongues, yet safe themselves in God's tabernacle, and bequeathing the reality of their work to others. Happy they on whom the mantle shall fall—the mantle of their 'readiness' and of their devotion.

We know well enough that such men must be rare. 'Every man hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that.' There is no honest toil which is not a part of God's preparation. Literature as well as science can equip for God's conflict. It is ignorance, it is undiscipline, it is uneducation, which makes us flee when none pursueth. A mind practised in study, whatever be its department, is not awed into doubting by the self-assertion of the infidel. It can weigh, and wait, and judge. And not only that. For one man who could be made with any culture an effective champion, in speech or writing, of revelation, a thousand are capable of being shod with that Gospel readiness of which the text makes mention. Brethren, it might make angels weep to see the waste here too often made of priceless gifts; gifts such as God gives, in these Universities, to England, and to no other nation on the face of His earth. You have before you, every one, a lifetime short at the longest, and then an eternity unmeasured by millenniums. As you prepare, so will you live; as you live, so will you die. Fearful the spectacle

of young lives risking, chancing, gambling away themselves: daring to undertake the charge of other lives, whether as masters, landowners, legislators, or ministers; daring to face trouble, doubt, difficulty, temptation; daring to settle their faith and to shape their destiny; without preparation long and anxious for responsibilities so tremendous. Listen, brethren, listen to-day to St Paul's counsel. Put on the sandal of readiness—not in the form (for of that there is too much) of presumption and positiveness, of prejudice and self-conceit, of swiftness to speak and incapability of doubting—but of that preparedness, for life and for death, which is only, which is surely, to be found in what the text calls 'the Gospel of peace;' that Gospel which Christ brought from heaven, stamped with God's fourfold seal, of holiness, of wisdom, of power, of love, and then committed to the safe keeping of a church for which He shed His blood; that Gospel which is the peace of God, knitting all the scattered fragments of mind and will and soul into one, and bringing all into harmony with that mind and will and spirit above, which is the love and the life and the light of men. Let not one day pass without trying the truth of that Gospel in earnest, resolute, importunate prayer. Ask God to lift up His light upon you, and convince you of the being and the power, of the atoning death and the risen life, of Jesus. Ask Him so to reveal His Son in you that it shall be no guess and no peradventure that He is your Lord and your God. Pray Him to keep you stedfast in this faith, and every day to frame and fashion your whole life, in thought and speech and act, after it. Ask of Him grace to try the strength

of the Gospel, here and now, by facing your besetting sin in the name and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Fight it out with the devil in some definite decisive battle within, after which you shall be able to say, 'I know in whom I have believed;' 'He is faithful that promised;' 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' One such experience—is it not to this that St Paul here challenges us?—one such experience is more to the soul that has it than all the books of all the theologians. The habit of such experiences grows at last into an evidence sure and stedfast, strong enough to form a practical answer to all who would say to you, The Gospel is a fable, Christ is not risen, prayer is a mockery, God is an abstraction and a name. You answer, Whether He be a name or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was tied and bound by the chain of my sins, now I am free and at large and victorious, so long and only so long as I live in communion with a Father and Saviour and Comforter, whom I treat as living and hearing and answering, as tender to compassionate and as strong to save. If it be so—if it be indeed so—that good and evil, falsehood and holiness, are in league for my ruin; that through a faith which is a delusion I reach a strength which is virtue; that by means of prayer which is idle as the wind I find myself able to become pure and peaceable and diligent and self-forgetting—if all this be so, then out of this wreck and discord of my being I can but choose the less of two evils, live the better life even in error, and bow myself to the inevitable conditions of a creature the accident of an accident. But if this cannot be—if good and evil cannot

thus conspire—if the lie cannot be holy, if the wicked thing cannot be true, then is my evidence sure and my hope stedfast. If the Gospel of peace gives me the victory, then by that sign I know the Author—God is with it and in it of a truth.

XI.

PRAYER.

Daniel vi. 10.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

AND was this superstition? Was this the lingering bigotry of an obsolete Judaism, surviving the transplantation into a land of larger culture and higher civilization? This man of king's courts and great employments, chief minister of successive dynasties, in whom eastern astrologers recognized a 'light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods'—was he showing himself a silly fanatic when he thus braved the wrath of his royal master by disobeying the edict which prohibited worship? Shall one who admires the courage ridicule the enthusiasm? Shall we praise the conscientiousness which faced martyrdom at the call of fancied duty, and condemn the infatuation which saw a duty in devotion?

Brethren, these are questions asked openly in the world, in the church, of this day; and they are questions which unsettle, where they overthrow not, the faith of many; and they are questions which cannot, like most

questions, wait for their answer, inasmuch as they are fundamental, crucial, vital, touching the very spring of being, and coming (so to say) between the man and his God.

We shrink, and perhaps ought to shrink, from a topic so momentous; feeling how much the comfort and well-being of souls may be jeoparded by its wrong or unskilful handling. We have thought to turn aside from it into provinces less perilous and less responsible. But every thing seems to beckon us this way, and to make every other subject insignificant by comparison. Pray then, we and you, that we may touch it, however feebly, however partially, at least with reverence and with sympathy; guided by the God 'who heareth prayer' to that which shall quicken and not hinder the prayers of His people.

There might seem indeed to be an impropriety, almost an indelicacy, in dealing in any manner with this most intimate, most secret intercourse between God and the soul. Praying is the object of preaching: but can it be its subject? most of all, in the form of an enquiry into the reality, the lawfulness, the possibility, of praying? A deep awe should indeed rest, in all such questionings, upon the ear that hears and the tongue that speaks. Far, far from this meditation be the lightness and the smartness and the asperity of worldly controversialists, of the strife of wrangling tongues. Put off the shoe from the foot, thou who wouldest discuss the mystery of mysteries, man's access to and converse with his Maker. 'Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass by,' if all the generations of God's Church, from the creation to the advent, shall have lived and

died on a faith which was a delusion? Here at least, inside the church, with memories dear and sacred of lives and deaths, near and far off, of which prayer was the soul; with an ancestry, more than of family, knitting us to saints and heroes of whom the world was not worthy; we need not fear levity or coldness or indifference in the listening. That which we could not bear to discuss with persons uninterested we will ponder together here on the knees of the soul.

It is wonderful how full Scripture is, when we read it in this aspect, of the word and of the fact of prayer. This one day, how full is everything of it. And what wonder? The very life of religion is prayer. Unlike in all else, all God's saints have been men of prayer. It has been their life. Explain it as you may, here is a fact of which philosophy, of which candour, of which common sense, of which common justice must take notice. Here is a phenomenon as plain, as certain, as striking, as sunrising or sunset. The antiquity of prayer —its existence, as a habit, as a custom, in the remotest age of which we have one record; the universality of prayer, as a primary duty of every man who has imagined himself to have so much as one spark or one echo of a revelation; the importance attached to prayer, in the mind and in the life of all religious men; the prevalence of prayer, in proportion to the emergency of circumstance and the vehemence of feeling, in the best and noblest and truest of men; the power of prayer, judged but by its results in moulding character and affecting action and even transforming life; the benefit of prayer, its enemies themselves being judges, in calming, softening, sobering, sweetening, strengthening,

elevating the spirits and souls of the righteous; these are all so many facts, which the unbeliever himself cannot gainsay, though he may profess to account for them on principles most unsatisfactory to the Christian.

Remember also that this antiquity and universality of prayer in God's Church has been realized in the midst of many conflicting influences which might have been expected to overcome it. Prayer, if in one sense an instinct, is in another aspect a mystery. That I should be able, kneeling on this paltry insignificant earth, to hold communication with 'the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity;' to think my thought, to confess my sin, to wish my wish, into the ear of an Almighty listening God; to bring my little, fleeting, dying life into the presence, into the regard, into the loving fostering supervision of Him who made earth and sea and sky, and in whom, moment by moment, 'all things consist;' this surely is a conception so little obvious or a thing of course that it must have needed more than argument, more than persuasion, much, very much more than accident, to recommend it so convincingly to the judgment and heart of mankind. And when to this mysteriousness we add the difficulty, felt and acknowledged by all who have tried it, of the work of praying; the reluctance of the natural fallen being to seek the face of God; the resistance of flesh and blood, much more of sin and conscious unworthiness, to the effort of arising in the far country to return home to One justly displeased; the exertion required, alike of intellect and affection and will, on each particular occasion of earnest importunate supplication; we may well marvel more and more at the moral force which has vanquished this

difficulty, and made prayer not only the rule of every religion, but the practice of all the religious. One thing more we must add, if we would be true to human experience: and that is, the many discouragements and disappointments of praying; the oft-repeated long-frustrated endeavour after a grace seen but in the distance; the patient importunate seeking, the late, the tardy, the partial, the imperfect attainment. When the sum of these impediments is taken, and we see nevertheless that prayer is, and is mighty, and is in all the earth; then we can appreciate, in some measure, the cogency of the evidence, and feel that it needs more than assertion, and more than conjecture, and more than theory, to destroy it.

And yet, my brethren, prayer would be undermined in one moment if that which some have dared to say of it were substantiated. If it were a sufficient account of this phenomenon, to say with the unbeliever, that the power of prayer begins and ends with faith in itself; that all its beneficial effects, which the infidel does not gainsay, are reducible to the influence of the act of praying upon the mind of the worshipper; that it is not that any answer comes, but that the asking reacts usefully upon the spirit of the asker; that it tends to promote calmness and patience and fortitude and benevolence, to suppose oneself communicating with the invisible God and Lord of life; that a man who imagines himself heard is solemnized and tranquillized and comforted, enabled to go about his work and to meet his trials with a gentler, braver, kindlier disposition; and that thus prayer is its own answer, and the common idea of an Auditor above is just as

good as the impossible reality—this would be indeed to cut up by the roots the whole habit and the whole conception. No true man will any longer pray, if you once convince him that prayer is an imposture however beneficial, a fraud however pious. We shall say, 'A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit,' nor can the lie be tolerated because it is convenient.

Therefore it becomes a matter of life and death to us to know the truth in this matter. 'Give light, and let us die.' If God has not given us the right to pray; if God has not made prayer the soul's breath, nor access to Himself the prerogative of a spirit which He has created; tell us not that, though a fancy, though an illusion, it is productive of good, and that, if it does us good, if it refreshes us, if it amuses us, we are at liberty to practise it while we can. As in the affairs of earth, so surely, not least in the concerns of the soul, our maxim must be, first, midst, and last, Be true, be true, be true.

We can suppose that few of these hearts have been always free from all misgiving as to the use, the right, and the efficacy of prayer. Times of depression, 'cloudy and dark days' Ezekiel calls them, come to all of us, when truths most surely believed seem to crack and give way under us. We have hinted at some of the causes which may thus operate upon our faith in prayer. When the weight of earth and flesh and time lies heavy upon us; when all around conspire to say to us, the things alike and the persons which make up our life, Nothing is real but the visible, and nothing is important but the material; when each separate limb of the soul is so clogged and weighted, that it cannot

drag itself, save by a compulsion which makes the act nugatory, to the arduous task of communing with One whom eye hath not seen, dwelling in the light unapproachable; when some particular chain of sin is tying and binding us, and we know in the heart and in the soul that that sin must be laid down at the very porch of heaven's temple if we would not preclude our own entrance and affront the majesty which is our hope; at such times a thousand voices clamour within us, each eloquent with some new argument against the good of praying, each bidding us turn some other way in quest of that benefit, in mind, or body, or estate, for which Scripture and the church and pious custom had encouraged us to make application at the throne of grace.

At these moments, my brethren—and I think we must have known them—there is scarce one cavil or taunt of the unbeliever which has not awakened an echo in the most earnest and faithful heart.

Sometimes it is the presumption—the impertinence, I had almost said—of praying, which forces itself upon the attention. Can I really suppose that the great First Cause, the universal Fountain of being, can have leisure to attend to this want or pain or unrest which I myself who would have it relieved yet feel in my own consciousness to be less than nothing to any one out of myself? Is it not great ignorance of my place and my desert, as a very insignificant inmate, for a very short life-time, of a very insignificant planet, to suppose, or to act as if I thought, that my happiness or my misery could be of any consequence at all to the almighty One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose

name is Holy? It is not always self-evident, though it is a deep and substantial principle, that all such hesitation is in fact the imputation to God Himself of an estimate of importance and insignificance which belongs altogether to finite intelligences. When we thus speak, however humbly and reverently, of things great and small in God's regard; of things too trifling, and of other things not too trifling, for His notice—even if the one class of subjects be the management of universes, and the other class of subjects be the aches and tears of a child—we are forgetting that it is the attribute of the infinite and self-existent One to measure not with man's measure the relative or the positive; that to God nothing can be great but Himself; and that, so far from its being beneath His dignity to take account of created interests and sufferings, it is, in reality, the highest glory of Him before whom suns and stars, angels and archangels, are in themselves 'less than nothing, and vanity,' that He visits with His consolation the prisoner in his dungeon, the widow and fatherless in their affliction; that He marks the first rising to return of the prodigal exile, and thrills joy through the very heaven of His holiness over one sinner that repenteth.

Sometimes it is from another quiver that the dart of doubt is suggested. You are asking God, so the cavil shapes itself, to 'make a new thing in the earth;' to interrupt, in your behalf, the orderly laws of His working; to do that which, if often done, would introduce uncertainty and confusion into everything, and replace the 'Fiat lux' of creation by an opposite

mandate, 'Let there be confusion.' How can God grant this prayer of yours, for the health (say) or the life of your friend, in disregard of that general connection of cause and effect which exists between a poison and a fever, between exhaustion and death? How can God, in this other case, hearken to the entreaty that it will please Him to counteract the regular operation of His winds and His waves, of His storms and His calms, on purpose that a particular person in whom you happen to feel an interest may be restored in safety to your home and to your embrace? How can God, in this other case, consistently with His moral laws, which are at least as real as the natural, prevent, at your intercession, some careless boyhood running on into a sensual youth, some sensual youth into a corrupt manhood and a ruined old age, until, as 'lust conceiving brought forth sin,' so 'sin finished shall bring forth death?' Nay, how can God—the thing which even they who doubt about prayers concerning weather and sickness regard as the proper subject for supplication—how can God, for your mere asking, interpose between your own sin of the past, and its just, its natural consequence in the weakness and misery of the present? When you beg of God a pure heart, you yourself having made that heart by your own self-indulgences a very 'cage of unclean birds;' when you beg of God a heavenward spirit, you yourself having cribbed and cabined that spirit, by your own obstinate indifference, within the four narrow walls of earth and time; you are, in fact, asking Him to break His mighty self-enforcing law of moral and spiritual consequence, and to encourage both in yourself and in others that

fatal habit of venture and speculation in the things of the soul which it must be the first object of religion—of revelation first and foremost, if a revelation there be—to discountenance and to preclude.

These are terrible thoughts so much as to shape into utterance. But they cannot be entirely new to any of us. And although they wear an air of reason, and with many pass for unanswerable, I venture to think that they are as shallow as they are shocking. If by 'law' we mean what (in this connection) we ought to mean, God's habit of acting, God's way of going on, as observed by us where we can trace it, as made known to us by whatsoever means; it is impossible to speak of any particular supposed act of God as breaking this law, until we know for certain every chapter and every clause of it; know for certain (in other words) that this very act in question was not conceivably a part of it. How if, for example, the prevalence of prayer was one ingredient in that irresistible will? How if God, unto whom 'all His works are known (we read) from the beginning,' was pleased to link together in the eternal counsels the prayer which should ask and the result which should be realized? How if prayer itself be a part of the predestination—that predestination which (we grant) none can withstand and none can modify? Something of this kind seems to lurk in those memorable words of God by Ezekiel, 'I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it—I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' The promise is ready, but the prayer must fetch it.

And is there indeed any immorality, any breach of

God's law spiritual, in the granting of those other prayers spoken of—prayers for the reformation of a life, mine own or another's; prayers for the cleansing of a sin-stained heart, for the elevation of an earth-bound spirit? O, if there be anything immoral in prayer, in the name of God abandon it. But if the highest of all morality be that which gives back a soul to its God; which uncoils the binding rope of habit, and makes a whole man free with the liberty which is in Christ Jesus; tell us not that we are risking God's law by bidding you to believe in a superhuman work of healing, or that we are encouraging in others a gambling with the spiritual life by relying with all our trust upon a God mighty to bring us sinners to repentance. Who ever in the history of this race was made profligate by the hope of a late, a bitter repentance? Who ever found the efficacy of prayer so sudden or so luxurious as to embolden him to relax in the confidence of it one struggle or one battle or one agony of the self-mastering and the self-amendment?

There remain behind, unnoticed for lack of space and time, a thousand possible misgivings as to the availableness of prayer. We cannot count that old doctrine a conceit which tells us of an enemy trembling for his dominion often as he sees one of us kneeling, like Daniel, to make supplication. Sometimes the mere panic is enough—Prayer is an enthusiasm. What if it be? And what if 'enthusiasm' itself means the having God in us? Sometimes, Prayer is a nullity. Thou kneelest here, in thy study or in thy chamber; thou kneelest and utterest words thin as air—pleasing if they be wishes—amiable, pious, hopeful, if they be

aspirations: but the great God is not here: He is in a far-off heaven: the blue vault of sky, the white-washed ceiling of thy room, bounds, confines, and flings back thy supplication. Sometimes, Prayer is a superfluity. God has decided this or that concerning thee; perhaps kindly, perhaps in anger: it is settled: why meddle with thy destiny? Sometimes, Prayer is a mistrust. God has charge of thee: dost thou doubt Him? will He not do better for thee than thou canst direct Him? hath He not said, 'Stand still, and see my salvation?' Sometimes, sometimes—said I not, always—Prayer is a trouble. It is so long ere I can set in motion the wheels of this chariot—so many wandering thoughts first, so many plans intervening of business and recreation, so many fears and doubts assailing, 'Who am I? and what and where is my God?' so many 'bitter thoughts, of conscience born,' telling of prayers defeated by sin, telling of prayers paralyzed by sin, telling of prayers vitiated by sin—O weary, weary, weary round of words, trodden each day, no day advancing me towards my goal, nay, not even if that goal be but the facility, the delight, of praying. 'Ye said also, What a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

Brethren, we would draw you back, God helping us, towards this thing which is indeed your life. We tremble lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief as concerning this duty—yes, let us use the old word till we can feel it, this privilege, this blessing—of prayer. There can be no life toward God without it. Brethren, there can, we believe, be no death toward God with it. Very various are the workings of life: death has none. Expressions, experiences, ideas, doc-

trines, estimates of good and true and important, these differ, unspeakably differ, in good men, Christian men, 'saints of the Most High' (to use this prophet's word for them), who nevertheless all, in their measure, 'shall possess,' do possess, 'the kingdom.' We do not think that they differ much in one thing: all pray. If we would be of them, if we would live good lives, lives above chance and change, above accident and circumstance, above disappointment and defeat and bereavement, above temper and temperament and temptation, we must pray. And—shall I dare to confess it—I care little how you pray, or for what you pray. 'Whereto ye have attained, by it walk,' by it pray, according to your light and according to your conscience. 'If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.' If you have too much limited the field of prayer, if you have not yet felt the compass of God's permission to enquire of Him, if either scoffing words or misgiving thoughts have kept you from the comfort and strength of consulting God and invoking God and importuning God about everything; be not dismayed: pray as you can, pray as you feel and know and are minded, and God, in His boundless love and pity, will tell you more and more, little by little, of the fathomless depths of His sympathy and of His strength.

It is sometimes the art of the sceptic to dwarf down prayer to petition. Prayer, he assumes, is asking certain definite gifts from One whose favour is valued because His power is infinite. It is further assumed that the gifts asked are of this life—health and prosperity, recovery and restoration, length of days and abundance of possessions; these are the subjects, the only ap-

preciable subjects, of that petition which is prayer. Prove then, he says, in the most precise, literal, business-like manner, whether prayer is of use. Ask the lives of one room-full of fever-stricken people, and ask not the lives of the rest. If you decline the ordeal, you are self-condemned. If you believed in the power of prayer, you would 'give the sign.' Even thus was it in the days of Jesus Christ. Very hard it might seem to those Pharisees, very unsympathizing, or else very suspicious, that He would not display in the sky the token which would have wrought conviction. 'The kingdom of God,' He said, 'cometh not with observation.' 'The kingdom of God is within you:' if you will not see it there, you can see it nowhere. Even so we all feel the impropriety, the inconclusiveness, the irreverence (whether meant or not) of the proposed test of prayer. Prayer is not the synonym of petition. Petition itself is not chiefly of earth. Prayer is speaking to God, whatsoever be the voice, the language, the subject of discourse: it may be confession, it may be adoration, it may be thanksgiving, it may be petition. If it be petition, it may be entreaty, it may be deprecation, it may be intercession, it may be for the life, it may be for the soul. Who pretended that a sudden, disjointed, isolated request, uttered once in a way, apart from the spirit, apart from the life's tone and tenor and habit, had any promise, any faintest hint of an answer? Prayer is the soul's language in the ear of a God known to be present. A man may pray who asks nothing, who but dwells in the secret place of the Most High, silent from petition, counting it enough to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, the All-loving. Enlarge your concep-

tion of this thing. Know that you can pray, even if you have a scruple about prayer for temporal blessings; even if you see not your way to prayer for wind and rain, for staying the course of a fever, or diverting the incidence of a thunderbolt. Call no man an unbeliever who does not expect and dare not implore special interpositions of a hand which he knows to be working and can trust to work well. He misses something perhaps of the consolation of the 'Christian altogether;' and yet his soul may be resting on the impregnable rock, and his life guarded, half unawares, by ministering spirits from God's presence. The reality of prayer is the meeting of the two spirits—the 'I' and the 'I AM'—unto communication, unto converse, unto interchange (with reverence be it spoken) of thought and speech, of life and love. Where this is, prayer is; though nothing be asked and nothing be given, save that ineffable grace of the Divine Presence, from which the earthly countenance shines, and men take knowledge of the man that he has been with Jesus. Then, in due season, then, in God's time, the transference will be easy and natural from the walking with God here to the seeing His face hereafter.

Brethren, it cannot be wicked to pray. It is no intruding into things forbidden. It is the visiting a home which was ours in our infancy, which shall be ours for ever when the childhood of our perfection shall at last be attained. Prayer is going home. Prayer is coming to Him who is our rest. Prayer is awakening out of earth's sleep, letting in the light of day upon night's dark dank chamber, and beginning to live. Use it evermore as your refreshment and your recreation.

'Bodily exercise,' this day's lesson tells us, 'profiteth little:' the life toward God, of which prayer is the intensest, most vital moment, 'is profitable for all things.' See that you make it so. Make it tell upon the life that now is. Prove it now herewith—not by its power to work wonders, to make sick men suddenly whole, or 'a plague of rain and waters' a firmament swept and sparkling—but by its effect upon your life's life; by its chasing the demon of lust and the demon of cruelty and the demon of a diabolical selfishness, and making you the helper of the weak, and the comforter of the downcast, and the example of the wavering, and the delight of your friends, and the joy of your home. When you find that prayer does something of this kind for you; that it will not dwell with sin, that it makes you strong for the soul's battle, that it is in you a reality and a power and a love; then you, and others with you, will have a proof not to be gainsaid, a proof worth ten thousand portents, whose gift is prayer; you will know that such a boon, so pure, so peaceable, so beneficent, can have but one source, one origin; is indeed from above; cometh down, like wisdom, like hope, like charity, from 'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

XII.

ILLUMINATION.

Ephesians i. 18.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

It is the prayer of St Paul for his beloved church of Ephesus. For persons of whose churchmanship, of whose Christ-membership, he has no doubt. Already called, believing, sealed with the Spirit. St Paul hears of their faith, hears of their love, ceases not to give thanks for them as he mentions them in his prayers—those wonderful, heaven-searching, earth-compassing prayers, which neither distance, nor isolation, nor imprisonment, nor (hardest to bear) compulsory inactivity, nor presence, by day and night, of a rude heathen soldier chained to him, could interrupt or embitter: and yet, when he tells us what those prayers were for these Ephesians, we might almost think, in our haste and in our formal rigid theology, that they were such as implied, not their immaturity only, but their shallowness and hollowness, in the life of Christ: for he prays that God may give them, as a blessing still needed, 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened.'

There lies thus on the surface of the text a lesson of humility and a lesson of wisdom. Let us never count

ourselves to have attained. Let us never think it too late to pray for illumination. Let us never resent, never repudiate the word which speaks to us as unto babes (still) in Christ. And for others—so many of us as are or shall be ministers of Christ—let us learn, in our preaching, in our counselling, in the tone of our address, in the manner of our shepherding, that spirit of hope and of brotherhood, that sense of the universal propitiation and of the individual incorporation, which shall make the very sound of our Gospel an encouragement and an attraction, saying this to the most backward and the most earth-bound in the congregation, Because ye are Christ's, therefore be Christians: because ye are chosen and called and sealed, therefore pray, therefore struggle, therefore hope: because ye are children of light, therefore walk in it, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

There can, I believe, be no question that the proper reading of the text will give us 'heart' for 'understanding.' 'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.' The peculiarity of the expression seems to have occasioned the alteration. And yet what a word is it, when it is restored to us. How beautiful, how suggestive, how bright in thought. 'The eyes of your heart illuminated,' to know two things: the first, 'the hope of God's calling;' in other words—for the 'and' which makes three co-ordinate clauses ought, I believe, to be cancelled—'the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints;' the second, 'the exceeding greatness of the power put forth upon us who believe,' a power measured only by that which raised Christ Himself from death, and exalted Him both to universal

dominion and to the headship over all things to the Church.

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.'

It would be a mistake to carry into the Bible that nicety of mental distribution which is sometimes deceptive even in human metaphysics. We are aware that 'heart' in the language of the Bible is larger and more inclusive than in our modern acceptation. It means sometimes in Scripture all that is in man. 'From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts,' as well of blasphemy and foolishness, as of passion and lasciviousness. Still that there is a difference, usually recognized in the Bible, between 'heart' and 'understanding,' will be evident in a moment if you try in some particular instance to interchange the two. 'With my whole heart have I sought Thee.' 'I cried with my whole heart.' 'In the integrity of my heart have I done this.' 'Give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart.' 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.'

The heart, brethren, no less than the understanding, has its thoughts, has its voice, has its hands, has its eyes. What is this but to say that the one indivisible being, the 'myself' of the man, has a real, an active, an energetic existence—and that in all manner of ways—in the province of the affections? The point before us—and we will keep to it—is, the discernment, the insight, the intuition, of the affections. The heart has eyes. The eyes of the heart are as keen, are as piercing, are

as quick and as far-sighted, in their sphere—and that sphere is a universe—as the eyes of the body or the eyes of the intellect. Who has not found them so? I dare almost to say that without the heart the intellect itself is torpid; that without loving there is no knowing anywhere.

Certainly it is so in study. What can be so dull, so lethargic, so stupid, as mere quickness, sharpness, cleverness, hating its subject? I need not carry back your thoughts to those first days of lessons, in nursery or school-room, when all was blank despairing darkness because the love of knowledge was not yet awakened, either in its pure disinterestedness, which is the promise of wisdom, or in that ambition of reward, which sometimes helps and sometimes counterfeits it. The experience is yours still. There are subjects of lecture and of examination which you dislike and therefore fail in: there are others which the same mind readily grasps and rapidly appropriates, because it finds in them a congeniality and an attractiveness, so that the eyes of the understanding are for them the eyes also of the heart. If you would know a science, you must love it. If you would know a book, you must read it with the eyes of the heart. Dislike it all the time, and you will never know it. Love is knowledge.

And who has not had experience, in life, of this phenomenon—a head entirely educated by the heart? There was one who, in boyhood, in youth, through school days and academical, was looked upon as a laggard and a dullard in everything intellectual; below and behind his equals in age, in all that distinguishes youth or gives promise for the manhood. But there came

to that man, under the good hand of God, the impulse of a new, a mighty affection—perhaps in the form of a human love, perhaps of a divine—and soon the whole being seemed to be lifted to a higher level, into a livelier and more buoyant atmosphere. Activity, success, usefulness, distinction, the respect of the world, the devotion of his own, the blessing of the needy, the visible approval of One above, began to mark his onward way; and a life, not of meritorious toil only, but (which is our present point) of real intellectual elevation, of opinion wise and large, of judgment profound and persuasive, was the result here below, the direct, the undoubted result, not of the expulsive, but rather of the impulsive power of a new affection.

If this be true of the knowledge of things, what shall we say of that of persons? There certainly the eye of knowledge must be the eye of love. Tell us not of people quick-sighted to the faults of their brother; of men said to be discerning because they are suspicious, good judges of character because with them every character is bad. That is a devil's knowledge, from which God keep us all. Doubtless every character has its bad side. The amiable are sometimes weak, and the strong are sometimes—thank God, not always—unamiable. The religious are sometimes censorious, and charity is sometimes seen—thank God, not always—in divorce from orthodoxy. I doubt not that evil spirits see these inconsistencies—see perhaps little else in us—and make sport of them. But he who would see another truly, see him through and through, must see him, in his measure, as God sees him—with the eyes of the heart, which are the eyes of love. How

often has it happened to you to judge a man unfavourably. You could see nothing but his awkwardness, or his roughness, or his ugliness, or his unmannerliness. Yet a friend of yours loved that man—wished that you judged him favourably—told you that he was to be loved. Could you but have got over your prejudice, could you but have willed to like him, you would have valued him, because then first you would have known him, too. The eyes of the understanding are nothing without the eyes of the heart.

Judge ye therefore, brethren, how little the intellect can furnish towards the knowledge of God. We would not undervalue—God forbid—theology, the key and the crown and the queen of sciences. We cannot echo that senseless nineteenth-century cry, which would make light of theology, pretending to exalt piety; which would say, 'We all know: any one can preach: why study the fathers? why institute a theological school or a theological tripos? theology, if it means anything, means religion, and religion, if it is not an imposture, means piety, and piety means feeling, and feeling means sentiment, and sentiment is a mere incense, a fragrant dust, aromatic and fugitive and evanescent.' Nevertheless we do know that a man might be a theologian and not a Christian. Why? Because the eyes of the intellect are diverse and separate from the eyes of the heart, and he who would know God can know Him only with these. God, as the hope of our calling; God, as the inheritance of the saints; God, as the resurrection-power, first to Christ, then to the Christian—of course no theology taught in lecture-rooms or tested by examinations will bring us to Him,

will make us know Him. One moment of prayer is worth them all—because prayer is the voice of the heart, and the heart alone can become acquainted with a Person. That knowledge begins and grows and is perfected in converse, in contact, in intercourse and interchange, in sympathy and fellowship and communion; not least when hope and power are the two subjects of the study—the hope of an everlasting co-existence, the power of an assimilating presence. 'If any man love God, the same' knoweth—let me rather say with St Paul—it is more reverent, it is more true—'the same is known of Him.' 'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.'

There is a second condition of seeing. The organ of sight is created, and yet there is not vision. Light is wanting. St Paul prays that the eyes of the heart may be enlightened.

There must be, first, a revelation of the invisible. The light unapproachable must itself approach.

Who amongst us believes in revelation? I know we reverence the name and the idea. The ancient book which enshrines it is dear still to the heart of England. Yet suffer, brethren, and put not from you, the word of enquiry. Do you believe that God, over and above the book of nature, in which he that runs may read what St Paul calls 'His eternal power and Godlikeness'—over and above the gifts of reason and conscience, by which discoveries may be made, true discoveries, of the wonder-working hand, and the right-loving will, of a power, a Person, who evidently lets us not alone—has interposed to communicate directly thoughts and facts and 'concerning' directions, as to Himself, and as

to His creatures? Do you believe in a revelation, real, direct, and original, of which God, God in Christ, is at once the subject and the author?

This is an enquiry lying deeper and reaching further than the genuineness or the authenticity of any number, or of the whole volume, of the books of Scripture. Revelation and inspiration are two things, not one. It is great confusion, and it is a great wrong, to interchange them. It is quite conceivable that there might have been one of the two and not the other; that God might have revealed Himself in prophets and in His Son, and yet not have inspired one word of the record. 'The light that lighteth every man, coming into the world,' might have shone in all its lustre—and yet the other and separate light, of a word written and legible, never have been kindled. We do a cruel wrong to others, we lay a needless and wanton burden upon ourselves, when we make faith in revelation, and faith in inspiration, convertible and interchangeable terms. A man might be a devout believer in the Gospel of grace and salvation, and yet not an implicit receiver of each verse or each chapter or each book of Scripture as equally, and as a matter of course, directly inspired by God. Let the two questions be kept distinct, and God will answer each, in His time and in His way, to the devout and earnest and honest enquirer.

But the former of the two questions is vital. Hath God revealed Himself to us in His Son? I do not ask, Was the character of Christ beautiful, and the doctrine of Christ sublime, and the life of Christ exemplary, and the death of Christ noble and martyr-like and self-sacrificing? None of these things would prove a

difference in kind, however great in degree, between Him and some few of those master-spirits which have appeared at intervals of a few generations or a few centuries to astonish and to abash and to elevate mankind. What we ask is, 'Was God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself?' Had Christ words of eternal life, brought with Him from heaven, for fallen, sinful, dying, immortal men? This is a question which will not wait. It is your life. Theories of inspiration, particular things in the Bible, authorship of its books, Old Testament miracles, I dare to call each and all of these secondary to that of the commission and the authority and the divinity of Jesus Christ. When you are a Christian, then you will have a thousand questions to ask—interesting, important, momentous questions, for which a lifetime is not long enough: but you will ask them of a God known in a Saviour; you will ask them on your knees before a Person in whose light alone you hope to see light.

But there is not in all of us this first knowledge. St Paul's prayer in the text is wanted here, in a sense in which it was not wanted at Ephesus. Brethren, we must not assume even our Christianity. We must not take for granted this first illumination. The eyes of the heart still need to be enlightened in thousands and tens of thousands inside the church. We still, in Isaiah's strong figure, 'grope at noonday in darkness, like men that have no eyes.' The experience of one, taken almost at hazard from a beautiful biography of yesterday, is the experience of multitudes of listeners in these galleries.

'I have always felt that there was a something

between me and God; that there was a barrier I had no power over, which seemed to stop as it were my communication with Him, to hide Him from me. When I attempted to pray, it was often with a feeling, Where shall I find Him? a sort of vagueness about the whole thought of Him. I am aware now that I did not believe in the reality of any deeper feeling.... Now, it is but faint, yet I have a feeling within—it is not a thought, a belief, but a feeling.... I look to myself so ugly in the past, that I wonder any one could love me.... When I read in my Bible, every word seems as if it applied to me personally; words that were before an empty sound, seem to pierce through me. All my previous religious impressions seem to have left the root of the matter untouched; now I am sure that I am being drawn to God, and that He will lift me up to rest wholly on His promises and to taste His peace.... I feel quite fearful lest the delicacy of the new feeling should be hurt or damped. It is certainly very mysterious. I feel a constant wonder at myself at what I am sure is no delusion, and yet is so distinct from any previous impression. It is not a difference in degree—it is an awakening to life; a removing of what before seemed to be between me and God, as if He was hid from my eyes.'

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.' My brethren, 'every man hath his proper gift of God,' and even His spiritual dealing is infinitely various. It is idle, it is worse than idle, to try to force all men through a round of successive experiences, each having its defined form, its assigned chapter in the manual of the soul's pilgrimage. It may be the will of God

that some of His spirits should dwell in a lower heaven of faith; should never in this life see Him with this clear, this distinct intuition; should have all their joy, if not all their peace, reserved for the year and the day and the hour of the beatific vision. These things may be—may be as a trial of faith, may be for other reasons, or may be as a discipline of loving correction for long foregoing years of indifference, frivolity, or sin. They who dwell much in the secret place of the Most High, serving with veiled face and feet, 'longing, yea, even fainting' for a brighter light and a more open vision, may well accept it as a cross to be borne if they must still cry, with the patriarch, 'O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

Only, only, brethren—we would charge it upon you in the name alike of truth and hope—suffer not any sophistry, not even if it call itself by a theological name, to persuade you that you are in the light when you know that you are in darkness. Some of God's saints have walked all their days in the dimness of a twilight hope and a flickering peradventure. But they felt it at the heart's core, and they made it a discipline of humility unto godliness. How different had it been with them if they had declared that they were in the light, that they had all, that all which they had not was either a fancy or an impossibility, because they

had been baptized, and because church usage made φωτισμὸς a synonym for baptism. Yet even church writers, when they write guardedly, can distinguish between the two; can show that they know the difference between the type and the antitype; can say, 'Mark, the illumination is before the baptism;' and, 'Without the illumination of the Spirit no man can attain to the knowledge of the truth.' Phrases and figures, half devotional, half rhetorical, harmless in days when Christianity was suffering, may become dangerous to truth, because dangerous to spirituality, when they are stereotyped, in an age or a world of promiscuous profession, into formulas of doctrine or definitions of theology. Let us accept with devout thanksgiving the place within God's church, within Christ's body, to which baptism has admitted us. Let us acknowledge the greatness of that mercy which has 'prevented' us with benediction; which has sealed upon the individual the world-wide redemption, and given us to draw the first breath of consciousness in an atmosphere of evangelical grace. 'Thy congregation shall dwell therein;' in the dew and the rain and the sunshine of a love perfectly free and a hope guaranteed by promise. It is every thing to know that not one day nor one hour need intervene before we begin to live the life which is hidden with Christ in God. That we need not wait for one sign, inward or outward, that God has taken us for His own and sealed us with His seal. That we are already His people and the sheep of His pasture; entitled to say to Him, 'Our Father;' entitled to plead the will which is our sanctification. These things are ours: let us not 'curse our blessings' by 'dreaming that

we eat' to 'awake with appetite.' Let us read aright the signs within. If we find no pleasure in the Word of God and prayer; if we know not what it is to speak inside the soul to a living, a present, a listening God; if in the services of God's house, if in the sacrament of holy Communion, we can but galvanize ourselves into a so-called devotion by gestures and postures which never get beyond a violent self-determination to believe that there is some One before us to whom obeisance is due, while yet with that Person, if Person He be, we never enter, spirit to spirit, into real communication, into conscious converse—it is idle to say that the eyes of the heart are enlightened because in sleeping infancy we were sprinkled with the baptismal water, made partakers of Christ, and inserted into that holy church which is His body. The blessing of that initiation is great; but it lies not in making it supplant the very grace itself which it testifies.

Brethren, if any heart feels itself this day unilluminated, not yet lit up and kindled by that living grace which is the one satisfaction of the true, let it pray for itself St Paul's prayer, let it resolve, let it determine—redemption, church-membership, the book which is God's legible word, the sacraments which are God's visible hand, all justify this resolution, this determination—to end this unrealized state at once. Not one year, not one month, not one week, not one day, not one hour from this present, shall find or leave me as I am. I have the right of illumination given me—I will use it. I will ask, I will seek, I will knock, on the ground of the promise. Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon this heart. Lord, if Thou art—and I know

that Thou art; if Thou hearest prayer—and I know that Thou hearest; I will come to Thee as such, as that which Thou art, and I will not leave Thee, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me. O long, long before this opening term has closed again—long before these dark, cloudy, watery days of November have changed themselves into the healthier frosts of Christmas—you shall have been heard, and you shall have been answered; the eyes of your heart enlightened with the spiritual presence, and you yourself made anew into the resolute, the humble, the often rejoicing, always hoping Christian. Yes, we exaggerate to ourselves the length of time and the outlay of toil—yet neither could be too great with such an object—required to gain a hearing at the throne of grace. *An* answer there will be, I dare to say it, instantly. An answer—a light, a peace, a hope, yes, a joy—so soon as there is what God calls an asking. We limit, God limits not. God never says, 'Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give.' 'If any of you lack wisdom,' if any of you lack light, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not.' Only 'let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.'

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.'

The duty is again this year laid upon me, and I accept it with thankfulness, of urging upon this great congregation the claims of a charity than which none can lie nearer to your doors—a few moments, I trust, will suffice to recommend it also to your hearts. This University, itself in so many senses a focus of light; light intellectual—light, I know, also, light increasingly, moral, religious, spiritual—dwells, like the church in the world, in the midst of darkness. It is

needless to assign causes; but I suppose that no darkness is much denser than that which hangs, or did hang, upon the suburbs of Cambridge. I say not whether any portion of this cloud of sin and sorrow is drawn from the very midst of us: the fact is not gainsaid—there is a cloud dank and pestilential, receding a little, driven backward by pastoral effort, yet existing still—and your aid is asked to transfigure it. Something, much, has been done during these past ten years, since first I was entrusted with this office—something, much, by the devoted work of men of your own body, who had before them the choice of all work, and chose this, the least attractive and the most disheartening—something, much, has been done, visible to man, how much more to God, to carry a Gospel of light and love into the homes of poverty, into the very nurseries and seedplots of vice, and so to prove once again that that Gospel has in it—might it be heard, might it be heeded—the secret of all light and of all love, between man and man, because first between man and his God.

Yes, brethren, think not that you are urged to an impossible or a chimerical effort, when you are asked to give for the evangelization of these suburbs. A work is in progress there, due in large part to this association, which for the Gospel's sake, which for Christ's sake, ought to be spoken of. In a district, once (I had almost said) infamous, numbering now 11,000 inhabitants, there are already three churches, containing more than 2000 worshippers on the evening of each Sunday, there are more than 400 communicants, 1600 children in church Sunday schools, more than 100 candidates for the annual confirmation—will you say that the money here

gathered is wasted or thrown away when such are its fruits? Is it not worth something—some self-denial, some foregoing of superfluities, some sacrifice of luxury whether in amusement or entertainment—to be able to touch but with one finger a work so pure, so merciful, so twice blessed?

This work depends still in large part upon your annual offerings on this one occasion. Brethren, it would move your serious regret, did you know, could you know, how great a discouragement you have sometimes dealt to this holy, this divine mission, by your indifference, I am sure your mere inattention, to the appeal thus made to you. Most of all, by the uncertainty, the precariousness, the almost capriciousness, of your response. One year this occasion gave a collection of £98: another year of £78: another year of £48. Fifty pounds cut off at one stroke, by a multitude of young, unthinking, unreflecting, not unkind hearts, disregarding, just 'passing by on the other side,' this urgent case of most real because most secret distress. No doubt we preachers lack the skill oftentimes to touch you. O, but you should supply, you should not punish, our unadroitness. How can any organization adapt itself to such ebbs and flows of charity? One year you give, and another year you cut off, quite without notice, half the year's stipend—surely not a redundant recompense—of one minister amongst these heathen Christian brothers. I pray you, let this be one of the good days—one of the bountiful givings. I ask of you a hundred pounds to-day. O, if each one of you would give his least possible offering, such a congregation could scarcely fall short of the sum of a couple of thousand shillings.

I do rely upon your sympathy to-day. None of you will pass those plates. And think, ere you give, who it is that asks of you. Not man, but Jesus Christ—Christ, in His poor—Christ, in His little ones—Christ, who told you the parable, the scarce parable, of the division, and the principle of the division, at the last great day, when the King shall come in His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations. Take that day, that scene, that revelation, into account, and then give what you will—I fear not for the reckoning.

Yet one thing more I would ask of you, while the heart is yet full, and while this remarkable spectacle is still stirring it to its depths. There is one particular suburb of Cambridge, filled with poor, growing daily, cut off from mother churches on the right hand and on the left, and destitute absolutely of any permanent house for its worship. It has nothing but a frail temporary tenement; open to every blast of heaven's wind; incapable of holding, itself, one-tenth part of the people. The time has come when that church must be built: and I am strong in the hope that this day shall lay the first stone of it in the hearts of this audience. I venture to ask a special, a separate effort in this behalf. Take it not from what a larger, a more comprehensive enterprise requires in this day's almsgiving. You are giving here for all the suburbs of this University town. I ask of you, beyond and beside this, that some five-and-twenty of the best and youngest of my hearers this day will offer themselves as special collectors for a church in New Chesterton. I ask of you that in this coming week such a beginning may be made of this work as shall cheer the hearts of those devoted Christian

men who are giving life and all its powers—no common powers—of understanding and heart and soul to the ministry of Christ in that district. Think not that they are idle—or that their poor destitute people are idle—in this behalf, that you may be burdened. More than £80 are gathered in that poor room in one year by the offerings of the people themselves. But they cannot—no, not if they gave their all—they cannot do this one thing—they cannot build. O ye whose hearts are 'enlightened' to the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor—for our sakes left heaven, and bore shame and spitting and scourging and crucifixion, that we might live with Him here, and afterwards reign with Him in glory—count it not a great thing, as though some strange or some hard thing were asked of you, to build Him one house, for His name and for His kingdom, for His worship and for His sacraments. Rather praise and magnify Him for setting you on His work, for vouchsafing to employ you here, and for promising you His everlasting rest, when, after serving Him in serving your generation, you shall one by one safely and peacefully fall on sleep.

XIII.

THE PERPETUAL PRESENCE.

St Matthew xxviii. 20.

And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

THIS is the church's charter. By this instrument we hold our all. If this be true, the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. If Christ, the crucified and the risen, is in deed and in truth present still, present for ever, with us who believe, then to be a Christian, a Christian all through and altogether, must be strength and safety and happiness, must be life and glory and immortality, assured by the word of One who cannot lie, of One who, raised from death, dieth no more.

The words themselves are strong, beyond the strength of this version; beyond the strength indeed, taxed to the uttermost, of our vigorous Saxon tongue. Each word is emphatic. 'Lo.' The 'eyes of the heart' may behold and see the Speaker. 'I'—the pronoun is not (as it might be) implied, but uttered and emphasized in the Greek. 'I,' whom you once saw daily and companied with in the flesh—'I' whom you have seen, these last days, come back to you, in identity of person and character, from the grave and gate of death—'am'—not, 'will be,' as though by some new beginning of relationship, transferring into a vague dim future the

whole thing spoken of: the present Person, in His present being, He it is that promises. There shall be no breach of continuity, no disruption or dislocation of the connection that is: 'I am' that which I shall be, and that existence, which is thus without seam or suture, is, for you, a coexistence and a companionship. 'I am—with you.' And that 'alway.' The Greek says, 'all the days;' as though to prepare us for their being many, and to assure us that they are numbered, and to bid us take them one by one, making each a little lifetime, and seeing in this sum of little lifetimes the aggregate of the church's opportunity and the church's trial. 'I am with you—all the days—even unto the end of the world'—'the consummation of the age'—the accomplishment of that period which is time, and so the introduction of that other period which is eternity.

The words are weighty with thought, and the occasion of their utterance was unique in history. It was a meeting between two worlds; between flesh and spirit; between life and resurrection; between men in the prison-house of sense and a Man in the emancipation of immortality. It was a meeting by appointment. The province, the district, the spot itself, had been marked out. Galilee, the scene of so many journeyings and so many ministrations—'a mountain,' 'the mountain,' as though perhaps the very mount of the beatitudes or the transfiguration—had been 'appointed' by Jesus Himself for this momentous meeting. And now the eleven, as St Matthew says—with (possibly) a larger company around or behind them, those 'five hundred brethren' of whom St Paul speaks to the Corinthians as having witnessed one of the appear-

ances—are gathered together, in preparation for that solemn conference of which they know not as yet the subject or the object. He appears. At first perhaps in the distance, on the mountain top, in sudden startling manifestation—as when He entered the chamber at Jerusalem, the doors still shut, and made His first greeting ere they knew Him present. He appears. They see Him: they worship: all worship: and yet—memorable, blessed words—'some doubted.' Some—is it not so written?—even of the worshippers. More merciful than our human systems, the Bible recognizes the possibility. A man, a true man, may believe, may behold, may even worship—and yet doubt. What is this but the anxious agonized cry, 'Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief?' Yes, if we would be God's theologians, we must be natural as well as spiritual. We must thread the mazes of that intricate labyrinth, the heart of man, 'yea, even of the regenerate man,' and record that which we find—though it contradict rule—for our reproof, for our correction, for our education in righteousness.

They doubt, yet they worship. Doubt, because the sight is wonderful, and the eye is dazzled as it beholds. Doubt, because their all is at stake, and they would not lose it by precipitancy. Doubt, because the joy is overwhelming, and the heart misgives itself, Can it be real.

He then, the merciful Lord, draws near and speaks to them. Such doubting, my brethren, waits but for converse. Such doubting may survive sight, it will not survive speech. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' More especially is

the voice of Christ reassuring when it sets a man upon work. Fear not, ye who know something of this kind of doubting, which is the mere flutter and trembling of the soul before a truth felt to be vital—fear not to accept Christ's commission, setting you your life's work, and authorizing you to do it as for Him. 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: go ye,' in the strength of it, and ye shall make the world mine.

It is not with the details of the church's commission that I would occupy your time to-day. And yet every clause is laden with instruction. There is the basis—the resurrection-empire of Jesus Christ. He speaks not of the original rights of His deity, but of the acquired powers of His risen manhood. 'We see Jesus . . . for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.' 'Wherefore,' as the reward of humiliation, 'God also hath highly exalted Him.' Unto me, not as God, but as the crucified and the risen, is given all power in heaven and on earth.

On this rock rises the church. It is to be a church of movement. Its journeyings are to be coextensive with earth. Missionary, or nothing—such is the alternative. 'Go ye, and make all the nations disciples.' He who said aforetime, 'The field is the world,' here interprets. Sweep all mankind into the Gospel net. Stay not—for that time is not yet, and that office is not yours—stay not to discriminate or to judge. 'Make all the nations disciples.' The very form of initiation is prescribed. Baptism is the portal. Baptism into the triune name. The name one, yet threefold. 'Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.' 'Into the name'—which is the revelation of God—so

that the life, the soul, the man, shall be concentrated, contained, and enveloped in it. This initiation is not an end, but a beginning. It subjects to teaching. A teaching continuous, thorough, minute, distinctively Christian. A teaching which recognizes Christ as supreme and the doctrine of Christ as authoritative. If ye call me 'Lord, Lord,' ye must 'do the things which I say.' 'Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

'I—am with you—alway.'

Try, brethren, struggle, pray, to realize this promise, this pledge, this fact—

The Perpetual Presence.

Surely, surely, we have here more than a farewell; more than the last adieu, however tender or solemn, of a departing friend to his household or his family. Such a parting may have in it many things—reminiscences, anticipations, even promises of an undying remembrance, even promises (it has been so) of a return, in vision or apparition, from the world of the unseen. But this particular expression, 'I am,' or even 'I will be,' 'with you alway,' was never used, I will dare to assert it, in the last conversation between a departing friend and his best-beloved. There is a distinct claim of divinity, of deity, in the words. Nothing short of omnipresence could make this true: and need I say that, where one attribute of God is, there are all attributes? Christ bids them go everywhere, evangelize all nations, busy themselves in all lands, preaching, baptizing, teaching, and this not for a month or a year, but till the end come, till the consummation of time; and

in the foreview of this extension and this expansion of the work He adds, 'And, lo, I am with you alway.'

We have here in one clause—and it is never superfluous, least of all in these days, to mark such coincidences—the whole of St John—Gospel, Epistles, Apocalypse, in one. Men will tell you that St John's Christology (as they call it) was an afterthought; a later and a morbid growth of Christianity; the idolatry of a beloved Master, invested by distance of time and by confusion of idea with a character which He never assumed and with a nature which He would have disclaimed as blasphemy. Brethren, we cannot thus dispose of the proper deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you have discarded St John, you find yourself confronted by St Matthew. St Matthew will tell you that, wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. St Matthew will tell you that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sins, and that He gave His life a ransom for many. St Matthew will tell you that among His latest words, if they were not the latest, was that promise which takes to Himself deity—'Go ye into all the world..and lo, I am with you everywhere and alway.' St John himself can say nothing stronger, however he may aid us in developing and in deciphering.

But we should lose a great part of the comfort, and all the distinctiveness, of this saying, if we read it with some interpreters as discriminating between the humanity and the divinity of Jesus, and promising the presence of the latter in the necessary loss and disappearance of the former. It is by such artifices of

dogma that the church is robbed of her bread. When Christ says 'I,' He means Himself and the whole of it. The presence promised is the Emmanuel presence, divine and (I had almost said, divine because) human. It is quite true that the phrase 'I am with you' implies naturally a divine presence. It was thus that God spake of old time to patriarchs and prophets, summing up all that is sustaining, all that is comforting, all that is elevating, in the one phrase, 'Certainly I will be with thee.' It is thus that the church concentrates all her best and purest and loftiest wishes for her children gathered under her wing for worship, in the briefest, the most touching of benedictions, 'The Lord be with you.' And the response is like unto it, 'And with thy spirit.'

'I am with you alway.'

Let us ponder together some of the features of this perpetual presence. It has evidently a collective and an individual realization. And the church has ever been in danger, more than in danger, of losing the one of these or the other. An excessive collectivity has pampered her into superstition. An excessive individuality has starved her into infidelity. The one forgets the one spirit: the other loses sight of the one body. And the wisdom of God has tempered these two together; making the separate life the condition of the corporate, yet in such sense that the healthiest working of the separate life is found, not in the keenness of its unit self-consciousness, but in the completeness of its self-forgetfulness in the corporate.

When Christ says, 'I am with you alway,' He addresses Himself to a community. It matters little

to the truth of this remark whether those present were the eleven or the five hundred. In either case, it was not a word spoken in the separate ear of St John or St Peter; not the 'Lovest thou me more than these?' and not the 'If I will that he tarry... what is that to thee?' These individual utterances have their place and their time, their lesson also for all time, as to the divine dealing with souls. But when He says 'with you,' He speaks to a community. The promise of the presence is made primarily to a body.

To the apostles, you will say. Blessed be God, yes. To those 'holy and humble men of heart' by whose labour and ministry the light of the Gospel was made to shine throughout the world. To those preachers and writers of truth, all truth and nothing but truth, to whom, the longer we live, the more profoundly we think, the more diligently we study, the more every day shall we feel our obligation. We see what the presence was to the church, if it had even stopped with the apostles. We see what inspiration was, little as we can define it, when we set it over against the very first, the very best, of those fathers of the church who had it not. But we cannot thus limit the compass of the 'with you.' We cannot read 'the end of the world,' the 'consummation of the age,' as meaning any event or any moment which has yet been. Certainly the fall of Jerusalem did not satisfy it. The fall of Jerusalem gives no sense to the same phrase as it occurs in the parables of the tares and the net, where it is distinctly declared to represent the time of the advent and the judgment, of the severance of the wicked from among the just, and the shining forth of the righteous as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father. If that is not yet, then neither was the perpetual presence only for the apostles.

Brethren, I would not willingly utter one word in this place that could jar upon any ear or revive one slumbering controversy. It shall be enough to say that 'you' here is the church. One man shall understand by the church an apostolical succession; shall think that the promise, spoken here to the eleven, had in its direct view a perpetuity of guiding and ruling ministers, tracing their orders in clear unbroken line to the apostles, and representing such of their functions as were not plainly miraculous to the faithful of all lands and times. Another man shall understand by the church her gatherings in general councils, where, in imitation (at least) of that first assembly at Jerusalem to which, as a matter of history, we owe it that Christianity was not made for all time a developement or a sect of Judaism, it may be no presumption to adopt the imposing phraseology, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.' We do not dispute such interpretations, because we see in each and in all a truth, if it be but a partial one; an example, if it be but a single one, of fulfilment by Christ Himself of the promise of the presence. We know the importance attached by inspiration itself to the orderly ministrations, to the regular offices, of Christ's holy church. The Pentecostal gift itself is made by St Paul, in the 4th chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, to consist in the grant, by the ascended Lord, of 'apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.'

He that despises such ministries despises not man but God.

Only, my brethren, we cannot consent to any such interpretation of this august promise as should formalize, nominalize, or localize it. We cannot allow it to be so read as to make it a promise to one church out of the many churches of Christendom. It must not be made to depend for its application upon particular designations, whether Greek, Latin, or English, of church officers or church governments. Even upon earth Christ was ever met by the questions, 'Where, Lord?' and 'When, Lord?' and 'Speakest Thou unto us, or even to all?' And now that He is not here in the body to answer such limiting cramping enquiries with His own strong 'Verily'—'Wheresoever the carcase is'—'The kingdom cometh not with observation'—'Say not, Lo, here, or, Lo, there'—of course such narrownesses breed and multiply, till they cause the gospel itself to be evil spoken of. We must say, reverence and truth alike demanding it, When Christ said 'with you,' and meant 'with the church,' He spoke, as that beautiful prayer expresses it, of 'the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world;' and when He promised infallibility—if that promise be a part, and we think that it is, of this mighty world-wide and age-long engagement—He spake of that indeed, that real 'semper, ubique, ab omnibus,' which is the 'consensus' of 'all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours'—that indeed 'catholic faith' which a man has who believes in Christ as His Saviour, though he may enunciate it with lisping, stammering, babbling tongue,

or mean by it little more than the grand old baptismal confession, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' This is that 'public opinion,' that 'common sense,' of all Christendom, which is the blessed unity amidst ten thousand diversities—a unity of which the home is God's heaven, and its tongue the harmony of God's universe.

We speak not to disparage creeds or articles, and not to make light of accuracy in the things of God. It is not by washing out all colour, and it is not by chiselling away all feature, from our Christianity, for the sake of precipitating a complimentary fraternity, that we shall promote the real interests of either truth or charity. It is well that each man should enquire and search diligently for himself into God's revelations, and that he should grasp tenaciously and feel strongly and maintain earnestly the thing, the exact thing, which he has learned and has been assured of. Only we ask that, as no man but a fool imagines himself to be the only wise, so each man should be willing to believe that another, expressing himself differently, may have in his heart and in his soul the same truth with him, or another truth equally vital. Then, instead of unchurching or unchristianizing one another, we shall have this far higher, far nobler, far more Christ-like satisfaction—we shall believe, where we see not, that the very gospel lies deeper, spreads wider, rises higher, than one little section of the vast human brotherhood; that Christ is in more places than one, has a voice for more hearts than one, yea, a voice of more sounds than one, like that 'voice of many waters' which St John heard in Patmos; that His promise, 'I am with you alway,' is neither to

Greek nor Roman nor Briton, still less to Anglican or evangelical or non-conformist, but to the common human being veiled under each; and that hereafter, in that which Scripture calls (were it but for this cause) the day of our 'refreshing,' God will indeed 'gather together all things in Christ, both that are in heaven and that are in earth.'

'Lo, I am with you alway.'

What then, we must ask briefly, are some of the characteristics of this perpetual presence—in the church, and in the soul? The words must be few: may they be suggestive.

First, it is a special presence. There is a presence in the universe. 'In Christ all things consist:' withdraw Him, and there is chaos. It is not of this presence that He speaks. I know not that we all believe in any other. I know not that we have taken into our thoughts this fact—Christ is with His church as He is not with the world. There is a mind and a will, there is a power and a work, inside this community which a man enters by believing, distinct from that which orders sky and sea, replenishes earth with life, and keeps the stars in their courses. This special presence is that which accounts for the very start and progress and success of Christianity. What could be so improbable before the experience as that a religion born in rude, rough, remote Galilee should ever cross a sea or make one proselyte? What could be so improbable beforehand as a Christendom—a portion of the globe characterized, as to its civilization, as to its moral and social and political life, by the influence of Jesus Christ? What could be so improbable as that this religion, not patronized by

royalty, and not propagated by the sword, could even survive its first exposure to the scorn of established philosophies and the persecution of powerful despotisms? We say, it was an enterprise, not audacious only, but inconceivable, save to omnipotence. We ascribe its success to the word of its author, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'

Secondly, it is a spiritual presence. 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,' once 'dwelt with,' now He 'dwells in,' the church. The corporeal presence is gone, that the spiritual may come. 'The flesh profiteth nothing'—not if it be the very flesh of Jesus; that flesh which Judas and Herod and Pontius Pilate, scoffing scribe and Roman executioner, looked upon and handled and were profited nothing—'it is the spirit that quickeneth.' Strange, that any should wish back the carnal presence when they have the spiritual. This is that presence of which Christ said, 'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Because I live, ye shall live also.' This presence has influences direct and constant, which are the life of the body. What would the word be, the book or the voice, without the presence? What would the sacraments be, the water or the supper, without the presence? What would prayer be, public prayer or private, without the presence—the presence of the assisting Spirit, and the presence of the interceding Lord? It is the presence which changes idle sounds, bare materials, fleeting wishes, into realities, into instrumentalities, into very 'powers of a world to come.'

Thirdly, it is a manifold presence. Every gift and every grace is due to it. Every office and every function

of the universal church is due to it. Not action only, but counteraction; not institution only, but adaptation; not formation only, but reparation—these, too, are parts of it. The orderly workings of grace are mighty and wonderful: what shall we say of the hand which ministers to the church's exceptional wants, as they arise out of the manifold changes and chances of worldly circumstance, of human thought? How often has the Christian of one land or one age imagined that the last hour had struck of his faith or of his church. He has seen one fortress after another stormed by the foe; one doctrine after another impugned, betrayed, trampled upon, by men commissioned to teach; a growing indifference to all religion, not amongst the profane or the profligate, but in minds cultivated and disciplined, loving truth and abhorring evil. His heart has misgiven him for his country's future; and he has sometimes asked himself, in the language, if not in the tone, of the scoffer, 'Where is the promise?' And yet, my brethren, the power of the presence has not been withdrawn: the medicinal, the remedial, the reparative hand has interposed in its season, making doubt itself minister to humility, and bringing out of the refiner's fiercest fire but a brighter and a more precious gold.

Fourthly, and above all else, it is a sanctifying presence. Men may cavil at revelation, fight over doctrine, ask all their days, 'What is truth?' There is one thing they dare not malign—and that is holiness. If the presence were protective only—keeping alive in the earth, as 'a sign spoken against,' a spiritual religion, offering happiness, offering heaven, on the condition of faith in a Saviour—it might attract the weary and sorrowful,

it would not appeal, as now, to the conscience and heart of mankind. Truly has it been said, Over and above the four written gospels there is a fifth—written not with ink and pen—the gospel, already eighteen chapters long, and each chapter is a century, of Christian lives and Christian deaths. I believe that this is practically the evidence which weighs most with this age. You can explain away, by the help of a strong will and a powerful motive, the evidences of miracle and prophecy and gospel success: but there lies still, at the bottom of the heart, the sight of some life, the memory of some death, which was either a mere delusion—calm as it was, and grave, and strong, and consistent—or else was caused, made what it was, changed perhaps into what it was, by the help, by the power, by the presence, of Him who lived and died and revived, of Him who said, and who has fulfilled it, 'I am with you alway.' The presence is proved by its effect. It is a light, it is a power, it is a life, it is a love: men do know for themselves what is the secret of their life, and other men take knowledge of it whether it is powerful and whether it is pure. If Christ can transform a life, if Christ can comfort a death, then I may doubt about many things, I may postpone many decisions, I may leave some matters for the light of 'that world,' I may submit to the pain and the misery of some harassing suspenses—but one thing I can see, that this is indeed the Saviour I need: one thing I can resolve, that through life's ambiguous windings, through the valley of death's dark shadow, He shall be with me, His rod and His staff shall comfort me.

'I am with you all the days till the end of the world.'

And is this 'day' not one of them? Is the presence lost? is the promise forfeited? Is it lost, ask yourselves, to the church? is it forfeited by the church? to the church, by the church, ask yourselves, of this land? O, we know, we know too well, her many mistakes, her many shortcomings, her many negligences, her many sins. If it were a pleasure to us, or if it could be a duty, we could count her faults by hundreds and by thousands. We could tell of schisms and heresies, we could tell of sects and separations, we could tell of neglected parishes and mission-fields unoccupied, we could tell of wasted gifts and lost opportunities and ruined lives, we could tell of unfaithful ministries and retrograde movements and reviving superstitions. But have these faults, these unfaithfulnesses, any or all of them, defeated and vitiated the promise? Has there not been, side by side with all these, a mighty counteracting and counterbalancing force of good? Shall any man presume to say that this or that measure, this or that enactment, if it be carried through, will have lost Christ to His church? Is it indeed so, that the perpetual presence is tied to a particular form of words, to the public utterance of a particular form of words, so that, if that be altered or silenced, then Christ will be gone? Shameful, arrogant, presumptuous thought! The presence is a life, not a word: nothing but habitual wilful sin loses it for the man, and nothing short of utter spiritual death forfeits it for the church.

Christ is with us still, in this church of England—never more vividly or more vitally. Never was there a deeper love for Him, for His word, for His sacraments, for His little ones. Never, since He ascended, had

He a more devout or a more devoted people. Can you point to any generation, to any century, in which it would have been better for you, spiritually better, to have been born? Can you conceive a greater freedom to know, to worship, and to confess? Can you conceive a larger, a grander sphere for Christian action and for Christian communion? If the word is now 'tried to the uttermost,' is not that very trial winning for it a more attentive hearing, a profounder study, and a deeper because more intelligent veneration? Is not division itself (haply for this purpose permitted) not only stimulating each section of the church to an earnest and not necessarily ungenerous rivalry of good, but also practising us in the twin graces of hope and charity—bidding us to look beyond uniformity for the reality of unity, and to recognize in other modes alike of government and of worship efforts at least, however imperfect, after a more primitive rule and a more spiritual devotion?

'I am with you,' Christ says, 'all the days'—and this is one of them.

Brethren, if the promise endures for the church, how is it with this its famous school and training-place? Has any change here effected, within or from without, robbed this University of a divine presence?

I know that here also, as in the church, there are symptoms which a hasty diagnosis might interpret unfavourably. We have not escaped here the infection of free thinking, of sceptical opinion, of 'oppositions of science falsely so called.' This University would not be national if it were otherwise. A college is not a monastery, it is a little world. It is a specimen of

English life, for good and evil. It could not, it would not, bar its doors against the entrance of any thought or any enquiry. Therefore those unsettlements of human opinion which are rife everywhere have their representation and their reflection here. But their presence does not shut out Christ's. Rather does it stir into livelier action the faith which is His, and which finds itself in urgent need of all its aids and of all its weapons, if so be it may both keep its own integrity and assimilate the still floating elements which surround it. Here assuredly, if anywhere, enquiry should be free, because here, if anywhere, the means of its satisfaction are at hand.

And you know, brethren, and we know, that never in the history of this University were the influences of Christian zeal and Christian example larger, stronger, or more persuasive, than now. The means of religious instruction, the encouragements to religious study, instead of being curtailed, are greatly multiplied here since the days of my youth. Christ's presence is here manifested in ways of which no tests and no subscriptions—fetters, always, only to the scrupulous—can take knowledge. Delightful, most delightful, to those who love the highest welfare of their University, are the tidings of a large and growing association of students, formed on the broad and strong basis of Christian communion, for the express purposes of strengthening the spiritual life here, and of sending forth hence, into the various fields of the church's home and foreign activity, men qualified, both in knowledge and devotion, to serve Christ faithfully in the service of their generation.

O, with such omens, such tokens of good, 'we will not

fear, though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.' Great are the responsibilities, great the perils—greater, for all true men, the encouragements. Work, hope, prayer—these three—and the victory is ours. 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.' 'Jesus came and said unto them, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.... And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

XIV.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

2 Corinthians ii. 10, 11.

To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

THE sentence is complicated, but the sense is plain. With that delicate perception, that refined consideration, that perfect courtesy, which is characteristic of him, St Paul is exemplifying here a principle which at a later time he avowed to Philemon, 'Though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee.' He would give precedence to these Corinthians in that act of clemency to which he invites them. His forgiveness accompanies, almost follows, theirs. 'I am as ye are,' he says to the Galatians: my heart beats with yours: there is an entire identity of judgment and feeling between me and you. Or, if in any point I have outrun you in decision or action, it has been (1) 'for your sake,' and it has been all (2) 'in the person,' or 'in the sight, of Christ.'

The subject of the passage is forgiveness. Five times

over the words, 'forgive,' 'forgave,' occur in the English version of a single verse. And it is remarkable that the forgiveness spoken of, though shown by a man to a fellow-man, is not here, as it usually must be in that case, the forgiveness of a personal injury. The thing forgiven is not a wrong, but a sin. The forgiveness therefore is the interpretation, the declaration, and the application, of a forgiveness divine, not human. If we desired a commentary upon the famous words in St John's gospel, 'Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,' I would turn to this passage. In spirit, though not in the letter, St Paul is exercising that wonderful function. I say, not in the letter: for there are two words in the Greek for 'forgiving'—one expressing a dismissal of sin, which belongs to God only; the other a condonation of sin, which may be either man's or God's: and whereas the former word is used in the commission recorded by St John, the latter is the phrase employed here by St Paul.

It is worthy perhaps of a passing notice, that the use of the divine word for 'forgiving' in that passage of St John, though it may well be felt to enhance the dignity and even the mystery of the commission, is at the same time a proof how entirely the absolution committed to the disciples is of a ministerial and even a declaratory nature: only on that supposition could the thought be tolerated, that God's own *ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν* was consigned, in any sense, to human hands.

But St Paul uses the other and less awful word for 'forgiveness.' The same word which he employs when he bids his converts, at Ephesus or Colossæ, to 'forbear one another, and forgive one another, if any man have a

quarrel against any.' The same word by which our Lord describes the generosity of the creditor who, when his two debtors had nothing to pay, 'frankly forgave them both.' So far St Paul uses here the language of a personal rather than (if I might so put it) an official forgiveness.

And in this act he makes the congregation participate. It is not to be an absolution pronounced from above, from some superior standing-place of apostolical isolation: he speaks with, not for, the church: ye (he says) ought to forgive: the thing to be forgiven is no wrong done to me: so far as it was a wrong, it was a wrong to the church, and it is for the church to forgive it. But in its truer light, as a sin, the absolution of the minister is uttered really by the church, as the echo on their part, whose spokesman he is, of an absolution pronounced in heaven upon those who repent.

So important is the task which I have laid upon myself for this afternoon that I must not spend the time in entering at greater length into the circumstances of the text or of the epistle. I will merely remind you, in briefest summary, of the steps by which we have passed to the point at which we stand.

There has been, first, an act, or a succession of acts, of scandalous immorality. And let me say—for it is essential to a right understanding of the sequel—that there is no power, in heaven or earth, which can unmake an act. By no possible or imaginable process, of human effort or of divine omnipotence, can a sin be unsinned again. Whatever else may become of the deed or of its doer, this cannot be. The thing done is done for ever. It is a truism, but it must be said. The most remote,

the most secret, the most venial sin can no more be undone again than a battle or a murder.

There has been, secondly, a severe sentence passed upon this sin. You may read it still in the former epistle to Corinth. It was a sentence mysterious in its terms—it speaks of 'delivering the man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh:' but evidently it was one of pain and shame and spiritual forfeiture—one which took away all that made life reputable and joyous, one which fastened upon it the label of ignominy, and pointed at it the finger of scorn and contempt. At the same time, there was in this severe sentence one redeeming word. It expressly spoke of a remedial purpose and an eventual hope. 'That the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' The life blighted and withered here might blossom into everlasting fruit there. I know how slow the heart is to accept heaven instead of earth; to grasp with any sort of reality the idea of a compensation so incommensurable, of a restoration so remote. Still it was there; and for thousands and tens of thousands of earth's children—prisoners, captives, exiles, outcasts—it has been the one ray, and it has gilded sufficiently a comfortless scene and a disconsolate sky.

There has been, thirdly, in the case before us, a realization of this hope. In the individual, a godly sorrow has replaced the guilty indifference; a sorrow of which the chief danger now is, that it may be excessive. At the same time, a healthy public opinion has grown up in the society in reference to the sinner and the sin. The conceit of a gifted but giddy community has submitted itself to the unwelcome discovery of its inconsistency and its deadness. The tottering authority of

their apostle has reasserted itself, and the moment for gentler dealing is come. There has been no unmaking—there could not be—of the sin: but a reparative agency has wrought effectually, and the moral and spiritual purposes of severity are answered.

Thus at the point at which this second letter meets us, amidst many doubtful and discouraging tokens which give to its later chapters a tone somewhat strongly contrasted with the tenderness of the earlier, there is in the heart of the writer a powerful decision in favour of mercy to the transgressor. The apostle, as well as the man—the apostle, 'in the sight of Christ'—springs forward to absolve. He has seen that sternness persisted in will be an influence not for good but for evil. As the interpreter of God's dealing, as the steward and dispenser of God's mysteries, he now hastens to the repentant sufferer with the balm of an eager, loving, pleading solicitude, of which the one argument is the divine mercy, and the one resistless charm the revelation of a free forgiveness.

'I believe in the Forgiveness of Sins.'

Brethren, I make no apology for the commonness, the elementariness, of my subject. Or, if an apology, only this—'It is your life.' All else may wait—but the great question, 'Forgiven, or unforgiven?' waits not. Or, if it waits, let it be only because the hope is so bright that it seems too good for us; because sinners such as we are must knock awhile at the gate, dreading above all things a precipitancy which may become disappointment, or a confidence which may fail us again in death or judgment.

1. In pondering this mighty thesis—not without

some reference (though we will not obtrude it) to the thoughts and sayings of this wilful yet most pathetic age—the first thing which must strike us is the inconclusiveness—I will not admit more—of what is called natural religion as to the hope of a divine forgiveness for committed sin.

Some have gone so far as to say that nature knows no forgiveness; that in the awful, however magnificent, sweep of laws of natural cause and consequence, there is no sign and no trace of any principle but that of a relentless exaction of the last farthing of the bond. And whereas some have turned this unforgiveness of nature into an argument against a revelation of grace, others—it is a new language to some of us, though the voice speaks from the grave—have forged from it a bitterly railing accusation against nature herself. You have read it in the public papers of the last week. 'Next to the greatness of these cosmic forces, the quality which most forcibly strikes every one who does not avert his eyes from it is their perfect and absolute recklessness. They go straight to their end, without regarding what or whom they crush on the road. Optimists, in their attempt to prove that whatever is is right, are obliged to maintain, not that nature ever turns one step from her path to avoid trampling us into destruction, but that it would be very unreasonable in us to expect that she should. Pope's "Shall gravitation cease if you go by?" may be a just rebuke to any one who should be so silly as to expect common human morality from nature. But if the question were between two men, instead of between a man and a natural phenomenon, that triumphant apostrophe would be thought

a rare piece of impudence...In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are nature's everyday performances.'

Such language can expect no friendly reception in a University which must resent an insult to nature as an insult to itself. It cannot be necessary before this audience to reassert the old truisms, of the beneficence of general laws in nature's working—their indispensableness alike to the welfare, the happiness, and the virtue, of those who live under them—not more the impossibility, than the unfriendliness, on the whole, of a perpetual turning aside to counteract for the individual the consequences of his own presumption, or to humour the caprices of a perpetually shifting self-will. It cannot be necessary to remind this congregation of such thoughts as are enshrined in one of the immortal masterpieces of English oratory: 'Tempests occasionally shake our homes and dissipate our commerce: but they scourge before them the lazy elements which without them would stagnate into pestilence.' Nor can it be needful to appeal to the impressions of those before whom I stand, as to the preponderance, on the whole, of enjoyment over suffering, in any existences of which they have had observation, under a system which certainly is our law, and with which it must be our misery (if it be not rather a great sin) to be at variance. None of us have had reason to dream of a malevolent intention in nature; though of a thousand instances all have had experience, in which the ignorance or obstinacy of man has tortured her, much against her design, into mischiefs and calamities really of his own making.

Here, in this house of God, a different line of thought is the more suitable. Here we may be allowed to lament together that utter dissociation and divorce of nature from nature's God which could alone rescue such expressions, even to the author's own consciousness, from the charge of absolute blasphemy. In one single aspect I can view them with satisfaction—as a tribute to the essential unity of truth and the truth; as an example of the intellectual consequences of drifting away from the faith of the gospel, from the faith (let me say) of either testament—faith, that is, in a God personally revealed to the mind and heart of His creatures. So soon as you part with one element of truth, you fall out with the whole of it. Take nature (as we speak) by herself, and you have something to say for this repulsive and odious view of her. We think that a sound mind, even thus, would repudiate it. But certain we are that these calumnies against nature could not be written down, would be scouted everywhere and in all companies as silly backbitings, if side by side with physical observation there were set other truths, other realities: I will instance but three: the being of God—the fact of sin—the revelation of immortality.

If there be a God, living and acting, concerned in the government of His worlds, interested in the true prosperity of His creatures, then at once it is made rational that we should believe in Him even where (as the prophet says) He 'hideth Himself.'

If there be that which one would think he must be wilfully blind who sees not—an existence of evil, explain it as you will; a taint, a bias, a disease, a degeneracy, which infects and corrupts and draws down

humanity, so that the moral being, let alone, will run to ruin—needs education, needs discipline, needs punishment, to save it from a perdition, not written in books, though the book were a Bible, but self-confessed in faces, in habits, in lives—in misery, in remorse, in crime—in a 'torment before the time,' in a death first and second—if all this be so, how can you know that the severities of nature herself are no part of this educational, this disciplinary, this punitive process?

Once again, if it be so—if it be indeed so—that there is a life after death—a life boundless and endless—a life beautiful, satisfying, delightful—a life realizing the ideals of this life, and fulfilling that which has here, at best, but been (as an apostle writes) partial; if by any chance the trials and sufferings of the present should prove to be connected beneficially with the enjoyments and perfections of the life everlasting; if in God's sight (it is almost a necessary consequence) this short existence is a mere moment in comparison with the whole of man's being, and pain, disease, bereavement, or, on the other side, pleasure, honour, human love, are all so many trifles and toys in comparison with the glories and felicities of 'that world'—what becomes then of this indictment against nature? May she not be, even in her hurricanes, even in her earthquakes, even in her explosions, collisions, and pestilences, a minister of God to thee, and to thee, and to thee, for good—cutting short thy imperfect pleasures that she may stereotype them into perfection—wafting thee, through a moment's tempest, into a region and an atmosphere in which the God of nature has said to all disturbing influences, 'Peace, be still?'

Brethren, the Christian hypothesis—if it be no more—deserves at least consideration at the hands of thinkers and speculators. For this reason, amongst other and stronger ones—because it certainly does explain and reconcile a multitude of conflicting phenomena; because, if it be true, it does give an almost exhaustive exposition of the dealings of nature and providence—reconciling us to short lives and disappointing careers and blighted affections as no reasoning can—saying to us, with a levelling expostulation, 'Were there not twelve hours even in that day?' and again, with a reconciling explanation, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' Learn to judge not a human but a divine judgment—learn to live the things above, where Christ sitteth—and instantly you and nature shall be friends again. Nature has been set against revelation—revelation now shall set us at one with nature.

2. But indeed, brethren, though we say not that we could with certainty infer forgiveness from nature—any more than we ourselves could ever see the proof of our immortality in the butterfly—yet it is so, we confess it, that we ourselves have been more struck personally with the forgivingness of nature than with her relentlessness. Even physical nature (if we might so unphilosophically distinguish) has presented herself to us as wonderfully forgiving. We have seen something of her patience; how she has not exacted the uttermost farthing even from those who most tried and practised upon her forbearance; how she has not accepted the first rebuff from those with whom she pleaded for their lives; how she has overlooked many

a folly and many a license, as though reluctant to strike—striking late and under compulsion. O confess, ye who fill those galleries today, has not nature herself been gentle, been forgiving, to you? How many a hairbreadth escape has she allowed us, when we played on the edge of the precipice, daring her to give the fatal impulse. Mark too the marvellous love of nature, in her processes of recovery and of reparation. How often has the physician said, with more than his usual accuracy, that now all must be left to nature. And has not nature responded? Have none of you hung for a night and a day between death and life? None of us can have forgotten one life, dear to England, which trembled long in the balance, and in whose gift back to us medical skill itself laid claim to the very smallest share.

We take an onward step in our subject, when we pass from the forgivingness of physical nature to the forgivingness of the moral and the spiritual.

Enter into that house; mark the perpetual discord which is there between two natures; the one, harsh, petulant, suspicious, censorious — hasty, provoking, jealous, cruel; the other, gentle and forbearing, peaceable and taking wrong, incapable of retaliation, on the watch to overcome evil with good. I have called them both 'natures:' but I ask now, on which of the two sides is nature herself—that indeed original instinct which looks upon all God's creatures and christens each either good or evil? Who can doubt that, apart from the irritations of the daily combat and variance, we all pronounce the forgiving spirit not only the beautiful, but the 'humane,' the 'human?' Who ever blamed

or ridiculed the yearning heart which pursued the prodigal into his exile, met him a great way off on his returning, and sealed his forgiveness with the embrace of home? We say that nature, though she has it not in her commission to reveal forgiveness, yet testifies to its consistency—I had almost said, to its naturalness—if it be revealed. We say that there is no doubt whatsoever on which side nature would be if she were called into the witness-box between implacability and forgivingness. All admire that softening, that relenting, of heart towards enemies and persecutors, to which they themselves may yet be unequal. All confess themselves vanquished, not victorious, if they yield to the rancour of a false pride which yet may find its palliations. No man ever yet called relentlessness a virtue, or enrolled amongst the worthies of history a man whose last breath was an imprecation of vengeance. We read in these things the testimony of our moral nature in favour—*if* it should reveal itself—of the forgivingness of her God. We cannot admit that nature herself, even physical nature, much less moral nature, is either hostile or neutral to the crowning revelation of the gospel.

3. And yet, brethren, for that revelation nature waits and is silent. Hers is an approving, not an originating, testimony. As with immortality, so with forgiveness, we should have been left at best in suspense, if Christ had not spoken. On either side there is something. In the case of immortality—if there is on the one part a mind and a soul looking before and after, a desire of knowing and of being, unsatisfied within the narrow confines of flesh and sight and mortal existence;

there is on the other part a gradual progress towards an equally gradual decay, and an anticipative clouding of faculties which seemed, at their height, capable almost of the infinite. Even so, in this matter of the forgiveness of sins—if nature bids us admire, she half forbids us to count upon, the indefinite extension of a restorative and reparative mercy. She has her deluges of wrath side by side with her rainbows of hope; and she leaves us to the last in ambiguous vacillation between the two conflicting peradventures of goodness and severity.

Christ Himself, when He came to tell us of secrets seen first in heaven and testified because known, placed this doctrine of forgiveness highest amongst the mysteries of the kingdom. In comparison with it, He called the doctrine of the Spirit an earthly thing beside a heavenly. Operations of grace, however mysterious, leave a witness behind them. The intemperate man become sober, the immoral man chaste, the churl bountiful, is an evidence—you may run as you read it—of a change and a sanctification. But of forgiveness, of the change from a conscience clogged with its sins to a conscience at peace with its God through the application of the blood of sprinkling—of this there is no direct witness; it is proved only by the secondary testimony of a life transformed and a spirit sanctified. We can ask no man to believe for certain in the forgiveness of sins, who has not first taken Jesus Christ to be his guide and his illumination. When he has done this, no truth is more absolute. It stands on the forefront of the gospel. It stands side by side, in the one liturgy of inspiration, with the prayer for our daily bread. With equal confidence we ask for supplies of

grace and cancellings of transgression. If Christ be true, forgiveness is certain.

And yet, when we think what sin is—what a sin is—what sin has made of a world, what a sin has made of a life—does it not prepare us for something extraordinary, something above man, beyond reason, to introduce, to render possible, such a marvel of grace as its forgiveness? Who shall dare to say that, if this fact of sin, this fact of my sin, which cannot be unmade, is yet to be blotted out, so that its natural consequences shall not result from it, but shall be reversed and countermanded, there may not have been something necessary, in the secret necessities (I mean) of deity, to enable and even to justify it? This unknown something—nowhere explained to us, probably inexplicable, yet stated again and again (as we read it) in the book of God—this unknown something is the atonement. I durst not say—knowing ever so remotely what sin is, knowing perfectly well what a sin is, how malignant, how remorseless, how revengeful—I durst not say that something, something which we call atonement, something of a divine self-gift and self-sacrifice, may not have been indispensable to its obliteration. And even of this method, as of the fact (they are two different things) of this forgiveness of sins, I say once again that this much-maligned nature does not contradict it, gives even some signs of it, if she cannot, and I know she cannot, declare herself commissioned of God to reveal it.

4. Finally, we say this—the text still guiding us—that the doctrine of a free forgiveness is a moral doctrine. It is easy to echo the cavil, If sin can be forgiven, we may sin on and not die. Most truths are

open to cavil. Certainly St Paul's gospel was so—in every part, and in this. He thought it enough to say of such scoffers—not that he could not argue, but he knew with whom to argue was useless—'Whose damnation is just.' There is indeed a way of preaching and a way of holding forgiveness which is not moral. There is a suavity of manner and a laxity of statement—there is a facility of reception and a carelessness of conduct—which, if this doctrine had been of man, would long ago have expelled and exterminated it from the earth. But, inasmuch as it is not of man but of God, it has survived all these death-blows. What is really injurious to holy living is a load of unforgiven sin. What really makes a man a dead weight upon this toiling suffering earth is the having inside him a mass of unexplored, unconfessed, unpardoned secrets, which perpetually drag him down and enfeeble and fetter him when he would run the race set before him and press toward the mark. St Paul knew this, when he wrote the words, 'I forgave lest Satan should get an advantage of us.' What was he afraid of? Was there not much to be said in favour of counsels of prudence? Take heed, it might have been said to him, lest the enemy say, This new Christianity is indulgent to lax living. Take heed lest you expose your gospel to the reproach of the scorner by taking back this adulterer into the fold of its charities. Fathers of the church, one age later, could argue plausibly against the readmission of the lapsed: policy was with them, expediency was with them, theology was half with them—only not nature, only not Christ. St Paul had studied more deeply the one book and the other—the book which registers consequence, and the

book which reveals heaven. He knew what hope is, and he knew what despair is, in the experiences of life and the soul. He had marked the softening yet strengthening influences of one of Christ's absolutions—of that unconditioned unconditioning 'Go in peace,' which ever has for its echo in the breast of the pardoned, that other word, as grand as it in its promise and in its power, 'Go and sin no more.' We doubt if any man was ever really misled by a gospel of infinite grace. The deceiver can deceive—the self-deceiver can deceive himself—with anything: but he who can misconstrue forgiveness into license must do so under that peculiar delusion in which will leads and intellect follows.

No: the true morality of the gospel lies not more in precept, exhortation, or warning—not more in the sermon on the mount or in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus—than in its proclamation of pardon for the lost and of a 'God justifying the ungodly.' How shall I dare to start again in God's service, with that sin of last night defiling my conscience? How shall I venture again into that church, to that holy table, where a week ago I prayed for sanctification, and whence I went forth but to fall day by day, trifle, and sin? He hath showed thee, O man, a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness—thither hasten, wash, and be clean. O, it will not encourage sinning—not in the honest, not in the honourable, not in the generous—to behold the Lamb of God dying for thee, and to be assured that on that cross atonement was made for this sin, for every sin—and that sin thine. Rather will that knowledge stir and quicken in thee every lingering faculty, every

faintest vestige, of good—'He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.'

Go forth, Christian, from this contemplation, a happier, a more decided, a holier man. Let there be no delay in making full trial of thy gospel. Call thy ways to remembrance, and in the full sense of transgressions and backslidings innumerable take to thee the larger mightier grace of a forgiveness prevalent for them all. Go forth from that laver of an infinite purification to live to the praise of Him who hath so loved thee. So live, that thou give no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. 'By pureness, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,' so commend thy gospel, and so win thy crown.

XV.

EXAGGERATION AND EXCITEMENT.

Ephesians vi. 14.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.

If the Christian life were rightly represented in some of the popular theologies of our day, this paragraph of Scripture could not have been written. The scene which St Paul opens to us is a battle-field. It is evident that in that prison at Rome he has 'seen the vision of the Almighty' with new distinctness. The time was, when human antagonists occupied much of his thought and of his energy. You cannot read his epistles to Corinth or to Galatia and conceive of him as 'not wrestling with flesh and blood.' In those days of his unbounded activity, he encountered at every turn living impersonations of principles which he abhorred, and he applied to the men, without scruple or sparing, denunciations which he felt to be suitable to the evil inspiration which possessed them.

We do not suppose him to be here implying any recantation of earlier expressions, or any reconsideration of those modes and methods of controversy which he had employed in other days and under different circumstances. To the very end of his life he was a keen controversialist, and sanctioned by his great example

the use of plain words and strong phrases where the Spirit that was in him revealed the presence of an enemy of Christ and His righteousness.

But we seem to be admitted, in this wonderful epistle to the Ephesians, into some of the special experiences of a season of constraint and seclusion. We can imagine him finding himself, like other spiritual men in like circumstances, by no means let alone by reason of isolation and solitude. If, on the one side, he was admitted into a nearer and closer intimacy with heavenly realities than had been possible even for him in the unrestful life of perpetual tumult and toil which had been hitherto assigned him; on the other, he may have been beset and buffeted by new forms of hostile malignancy, opening before him a breadth and depth of view, not before realized, of the subtlety and the nearness of agencies and agents of evil. Instead of enjoying any immunity, in his time of enforced silence and inactivity, from the assaults of spiritual foes, he may have discovered now, and therefore recorded, that presence, everywhere and at all times, of an organized system and living empire of evil, which demands for its counteraction, not only a vigilance which never sleeps and a prayer which never tires, but also, and above all, an investiture with what he describes as the panoply of God Himself, to enable us to 'withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.'

The revelation indeed of a kingdom of darkness stands everywhere in Christ's gospel beside the other revelation of a kingdom of light. And as it unquestionably tallies with many phenomena of the human experience, so is it the only real key to many of those

mysteries of grief and iniquity which form the chief difficulty for Christian philosophy in its endeavour to justify the ways of God to men. If there be in existence a vast and potent kingdom of evil, against which a God of love and holiness is waging a resolute war, but of which the final overthrow and downfall is not yet; then we can refrain from that ingenious cobweb-spinning of unreal consolations in which some amiable hands have busied themselves without advancing by one step the real reconciliation between the idea of a God of omnipotent strength and the idea of a God of infinite love. Rather let us be bold to say, when some horrible sin has wrought out its perfect work in the misery of innocent thousands, It was not the will of God—God was not in it—it was conceived, it was brought forth, it was cradled, it was matured, in the other realm, in the bureaux and ministries not of good but of evil—'how long, O Lord, dost Thou not judge and avenge,' when the machinations and the stratagems of Thy foe are so many, so mighty? 'An enemy hath done this.' 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritualities of wickedness in high places.'

The formidableness of the foe is one thought here, and it were well if we felt instead of disparaging it. We know not by what stages of time or by what steps of procedure it may be necessary in the nature of things that a God of love and omnipotence should pass to the reconquest of a rebel creation. The attempt to represent that reconquest as done as soon as willed—done easily, done instantaneously, if there be omnipotence as

well as love in the willer—is an example of that confusion between brute force and moral which has been so prolific of error in the controversies of theologians. Let us be just at all costs to the evidence of fact and to the deposition of conscience. It is idle to read the thing that is by the light of a wish or an imagination. Evil is very strong at present in a world which has admitted it: there is but one thing mightier—and the battle is still raging between them, though the word that cannot lie has prophesied the issue.

The other prominent thought is peculiar, I believe, to this epistle. In the second chapter we read of 'the prince of the power of the air' as managing the operation of evil in 'the children of disobedience.' Here, we find the seat of his empire defined as 'the heavenly places;' not (of course) in the very highest sense of those words, as the 'heaven of heavens' in which God dwells, and into which Christ entered by ascension; but in that wider and vaguer sense of heaven, in which it is synonymous with the air or atmosphere, and in which we read indiscriminately in Scripture of 'the birds of the air' and of 'the fowls of the heaven.' It is in that lower, that earthlier heaven that St Paul places the habitation of the evil spirits, as though to give energy to the idea of their nearness to us, of their presence with us, as in the very air we breathe—of their impalpableness too, as incorporeal and immaterial foes, to be encountered only in the power of that superhuman faith, which grasps the intangible and sees the invisible. If such be the power, and such the secrecy, of the enemy with whom we wrestle, only God's armour can avail for the battle—in which even 'to withstand' is not

all: there is an evening too, and an eternal morrow, to be thought of: 'having done all, to stand.'

'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.'

Truth—reality—the thing that is—the opposite and the antagonist (in every form and shape) of the lie, 'the thing nothing,' the pretended being that is not—this truth has, of course, two aspects. In one aspect, truth belongs to the object contemplated. In another aspect, truth belongs to the mind contemplating. It has therefore two contraries, the mention of which will give us the best idea of it: falsehood is one—hypocrisy is the other. Both are unrealities, untruths: but the one is unreality in the object, and the other is unreality in the person viewing it.

Now it is quite intelligible—it commends itself to experience as well as reason—that St Paul places truth first among the particulars of the divine panoply. There are some adversaries who may possibly be confronted without discomfiture in counterfeit or unproved armour. For an encounter between two men of the world, in those battles which are fought every day in the arenas of business, politics, or fashion, it is conceivable that a show of earnestness may answer almost as well for the time as its reality, and that the object round which the fight rages may be quite as probably a shadow as a substance. It is not so in that war to which St Paul here summons us. When the life or death of the soul, the happiness or misery of an eternity, is the thing at stake; and when the enemy to be vanquished is not carnal but spiritual, meeting us as in the air we breathe and the circumstance which is our life; then it is plain

that the first condition of the availableness of a weapon must be truth, must be reality, in both and in all its senses: no mockery would be more frightful than that which should say to us, 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with falsehood—Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with hypocrisy.'

It would be an injustice as well as an affront to this audience to address to it, in this most superficial, this coarsest interpretation, St Paul's charge in the text, to have the loins girt with truth. But there is a sense in which no English audience in this our day—least of all, a congregation which has in it so many of the future ministers of the church of God—can be spoken to without profit concerning the claims of truth. There is a vice of this age which seems to me to be one chief peril of our theology, and which is of near kin to that first opposite of truth, which is falsehood—I mean Exaggeration. And there is a vice of this age, which seems to me to be one chief peril of our religion, and which is of near kin to that second opposite of truth, which is hypocrisy—I mean Excitement. In reference to these two, I shall venture, with all plainness of speech, but (I trust) also in all humility and in all charity, to urge upon you, in this closing address, the solemn admonition of St Paul, 'We wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual foes' nearer and mightier: 'stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.'

1. In days like ours, when 'the world has lost his youth,' when an indescribable weariness, as of a thrice-told tale, has settled down upon hearers and readers in every department of traditional thought and old

opinion, one of the readiest revivals of interest is found in the region of exaggeration. Some principle, some doctrine, some duty, having its root (or it would not answer the purpose) in truth and the Bible, is set by itself, enforced and dwelt upon, garnished with new embellishments, made into the truth and the whole of truth: everything is referred to it, every one is judged by it: loud assertion, confident assumption, ingenious illustration, arrogant disdain, unscrupulous argument, each lends its weight and its impulse to the growing and gathering system: at last it becomes powerful in voices and numbers, and takes its defined place as one of those last new things in religion by which a languid and drowsy church is roused into the semblance (at least) of a livelier life and a fresh devotion. This has been the history, in all times, of the origination of religious sects and parties. Not falsehood, but exaggeration—often the disinterment of a buried truth, itself an integral part of God's revelation, overlaid, hidden, forgotten for years in the ministry or in the theology of a particular church, discovered again by the toil of one mind or through the agony and anguish of one soul, found to be living and life-giving, then isolated, distorted, deified, made a badge and a discord, carrying (in its turn) mischief into lives and schism into churches—not falsehood, but exaggeration, has done this—again it has been seen that, if Christianity would stand in the battle, the loins must be 'girt about with truth.' For our purpose, exaggeration is weakness, the 'spiritualities' with which we wage war are quick to discern and to find it out.

It is not only or chiefly on this large scale—as the parent of heresies and schisms—that we are concerned with the working of exaggeration today. Let us look at it as it comes near us, in the teaching and practice which, on this side or that, professes and believes itself to be that of Christ and the church.

And here our very purpose would be defeated, our own principle would be belied, if we drew our illustrations from one line of teaching, from one form of practice, alone, and gave a moment's encouragement to the thought that in an opposite line or form of either lay the reality or the whole of truth. Suffer me to speak here as I am—a man of no party—a man believing that no party in the church either wholly lacks, or exclusively possesses, the truth itself 'as it is in Jesus.' Let me freely speak to you that which is in my heart, fearless of misconstruction, concerning things which all know, and which must have, in themselves, apart altogether from party considerations, a definite right and wrong.

I will venture, so guarding myself, to say one word on that solemn and sacred topic, the sacraments, the two sacraments, instituted by Christ for His church. None surely can gainsay the sanctity of an ordinance of which our Master said, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'—or again, 'Take, eat—this is my body...Drink ye all of this: for this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for many.' But how if we are made to overlook, or throw into the shade, the companion texts to these—'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' and, 'It is the spirit

that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing?' How if, every thought of distinction and difference being thrown aside, we be compelled to declare every process of grace which made baptism, to primitive converts of mature age, the very point and moment of transition from death unto life, to have taken place, in mystery and miracle, within the soul of an infant child—so that, if after baptism he lives carelessly as boy or youth, he has sinned not against light or grace only, but distinctly against a Holy Ghost once actually received into the temple of his own heart? Is there not, in such statements, an exaggeration which is unreality, and which brings with it a conscious embarrassment when we would gird ourselves with it for the actual conflict with evil? Were we not bound to recognize some distinction between two legitimate applications of the same scriptural metaphor—in other words, between a regeneration which is a change of life and a regeneration which is a change of state—a transfer (is that a small thing?) from the world of nature and of the fall into the world of privilege and promise and grace?

It is thus with the other holy sacrament. I do not mean for one moment to imply that any teaching represents it as an indiscriminate guarantee of salvation. None assuredly would more anxiously fence its reception with every argument of caution and warning than they who attribute to its right reception a unique and incomparable communication of grace. But is there no risk, in some language held concerning it, of an isolation of this holy ordinance, in kind as well as in degree, from every other exercise whatsoever of the

divine life? Is there no opening for the taunt, You make it the whole of religion to receive the sacrament? Shall we feel no risk of exaggeration in a view of this one means of grace which would remove it out of—I had almost said, would set it at variance with—the book of Gospel doctrine and Gospel precept as a whole, and frame for it by itself a separate theology out of isolated expressions—sometimes quite evidently emotional and not doctrinal—of the uninspired writers of a post-apostolic age?

We turn in another direction.

There is growing amongst us a representation of evangelical doctrine, which threatens to caricature the very gospel itself of our Lord and Saviour. Not only do we hear—as the church has always heard—statements of the doctrine of grace which are, in expression at least, daringly, recklessly antinomian; parodies of St Paul's language, to Romans and Ephesians, as to the valuelessness of good works, their utter paltriness and defilement at the best, in the sight of a heart-searching God—their absolute nothingness at the best in earning an acceptance forfeited by innumerable sins, and not to be won back by an obedience, itself impossible, yet at all events only just self-sufficing, leaving nothing over for retrospect or supererogation: much, much beyond this runs the last vagary, in England and America, of this inveterate tendency of the old nature in the regenerate. We are taught now that prayer itself is more than half a sin; that anything which doubts or misgives itself as to the sufficiency of the conversion or the progress of the sanctification—any self-sorrow, any self-effort, any self-control or self-

denial—is, to the same extent, unbelief towards Jesus—whose engagement is, whose guarantee is, certain, absolute, indefeasible salvation for all who have once given themselves into His love and His protection. Superfluous then, if not erroneous, according to this latest light of an instantaneous salvation, must be three fourths, or nine tenths, of the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Superfluous, nay, misleading, the words on which I am addressing you, 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.' Yet here too, even in this strange phantom of doctrine, is less of falsehood than of exaggeration: there are texts to be found, which might seem to say even this: only not Scripture as a whole—only not the voice of God in the average and on the balance of its utterances.

Exaggerations like this have many phases and many provinces. A multitude of them centre in this all-important point—the individual hope and life. We have lived through many forms and many fashions of it. We can remember when a salvation by works, pure and simple, was by no means matter of hypothesis or of history; when the serious teaching of men of devout mind was necessarily devoted to the overthrow of the fabric of the self-righteousness, itself shrunk by that time to a mere shell and husk of decorum, with its public worship on Sunday and its thrice-a-year communion. Then we saw the substitution for this, of a grave anxious doctrine of conversion—with its orderly tabulated stages, and its certificate of admission, for those who had duly passed through them, into a sort of new communion and fellowship, a church within a church, fenced by a code of understood prohibitions,

and by a free-masonry of mysterious recognitions. Last of all, we have lived into a period of instantaneous illuminations—acceptances, in mission or confessional, of a free salvation, and admissions by this sudden process, of a day or an hour, into a privileged society of persons trusting in themselves that they are safe beyond conflict, and bidding others, by the same leap of a moment, to follow them. Thus meet once more the extremes of faith and works. Thus creeps in again the old Adam of a most unevangelical exclusiveness, and the construction of a new fabric, not of works but (this time) of feelings, of which it is confidently hoped that the top may reach heaven.

Brethren, I protest in the name of the God of the Bible against this latest product of exaggeration. A few texts, torn from their context, may prop or bolster it: but it is a building of human construction, and it must perish 'in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.'

Our hope shall rest not upon ordinances, not upon feelings—but upon that which God has done for us in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall refuse to build after Him—we shall build upon Him. We shall say to the young man who asks of us the way of salvation, 'All things are yours—life and death, the world and heaven, things present and things to come—all are yours—for you are already Christ's, and Christ is God's. Wait not for any thing to come to pass around or within you. Christ's by redemption, Christ's by the gospel call, Christ's by the individual baptism, as such begin to live—as such prepare to die. Take the language of God in holy Scripture according

to its general tone and tenor. If a particular passage seems to contradict this, ponder, compare, and pray. Let it not stop you in your resolution to live the life of God. That cannot be its meaning. At last there shall arise upon it for thee God's marvellous light.'

Brethren, Christian brethren, gird yourselves betimes with truth. You will want it all. There are tokens, real and unmistakable, in this England, of a terrible schism. Not a schism—I care not (I had almost said) for that—between liturgies and no liturgies, between rival denominations, between church and dissent: these things may be religious schisms; divisions more of name than of thing; indications of earnestness, which a pertinacious charity may conquer back, if it please God, into a substantial, at least an eventual, unity. The schism of which I speak is a schism between the church and her pastors—between the ministers and the ministered unto—between the clergy and the laity of England. This is why I speak to you as I have spoken today. Exaggeration is the bane: truth, truth, is the antidote. If once there should arise among the ministers of our national church a practical, however unconscious, severance from the bonds of sober judgment and of common sense; if once they should begin to assume to themselves an independence of those unwritten but most real laws, of moderation and naturalness and good taste, which are just as much Christ's as any revelation which He brought with Him afterwards out of heaven; there is an end of this ministry thenceforth in its blessed, its beneficent influence within, and without also, the confines of our communion.

There is but one way of preventing—God grant there

be still time, and still the heart, to prevent—this fatal, this ruinous breach: and it is that which the text points out. Ministers of Christ—ministers of the church of the future—gird yourselves round about with truth. Suffer not in yourselves that most dangerous habit, of over-stating just a little, for effect's sake, that which you deliver as your gospel. Rather habituate yourselves to that exact, that accurate utterance of the very thing itself which you are assured of, which may indeed lose you for the moment the applause of the crowd, but which will enter for everlasting habitation into the heart's heart of the thoughtful. Say not, in your own excuse or in excuse for your party, that a little exaggeration is harmless; that no one man, no one party, is responsible for the preservation of that equilibrium of the whole church and of the whole truth, for which God will take care, and which is rather the resultant of all forces than the operation of one. Least of all give way to that dreadful, that self-made necessity, of lashing up your own flagging energy by the enunciation of strong sayings, impressive perhaps to others, but to yourself at this moment unreal. Beware of those cloudy and mysterious hintings of sacerdotal power, which can be explained away (I know) to-morrow into nothing, but which common English listeners will assuredly interpret today into every thing. The minister of Christ, were it but for his country's and for his church's sake, must be careful above all men to gird himself round and round with truth.

2. We leave ourselves but a fragment of space for the other foe of truth, which we have called excitement. Doubtless you will say, and we shall not dispute

it, Excitement is not only pleasant and enjoyable in a life social and mental; not only does it bring a zest and a sparkle into the vapid waters of earth, and communicate to all her activities a stir and an impulse without which they must soon stagnate into deadness—excitement has its use, over and above all these, even in the economy of grace. St Paul himself implies this, when he sets, in this epistle, the 'fulness of the spirit' over against the 'excess of wine.' He means evidently that that craving which is in us by nature for the exhilaration of the whole frame into a quicker and livelier action, and which seeks its vent too often in sensual indulgence, shall not lack its satisfaction in the Christian, whose privilege it is to find in the spiritual life, without stint and without remorse, all that sin professes to offer of intensifying and vivifying stimulus. We cannot admit that this passage is decisive as to the wholesomeness of any particular form of excitement which may offer itself, under cover of it, for the use of the church of God.

The life of the church of this day is in very large part a life of excitement. There is a very general consent to make it so. On the one side, we find a great multiplication of religious meetings and ecclesiastical assemblies. The life of a prominent churchman is lived largely in public. Convocation, with its committees in intermediate session—diocesan synods, diocesan conferences—the annual church congress, with its increasing numbers and widening subjects—ruridecanal chapters, with or without the addition of the older and less pretentious clerical meetings—furnish, amongst them, a list of engagements, of which, without

expressing any opinion upon their positive or relative value, this must be said—that they offer a tempting alternative, for men of ready speech and natural ability, to that life of secluded study and parochial absorption which was, within the recollection of some of us, the only career of an English pastor who had a conscience and who would do his duty.

Side by side with these new attractions for the clergyman, he on his part has opened to his people a multitude of interests before unknown. Not to mention an increase of regular services, on Sunday and week-day, for which the prayer-book had made provision, and to which parishioners had a right; we have witnessed a fertility and ingenuity of invention, in the matter of public festal and penitential worship, which has gradually spread and multiplied, until the only fear is lest it should too much overlay and crush that spirit of private and secret devotion which was the only outlet, a quarter of a century ago, for the spiritual exercises of a heart quickened to God and a life dedicated to His service.

But the tendencies of which we speak are not thus bounded. It is the avowed object, not of one, but of both the great parties in our church, to stimulate to the uttermost and in every way the spiritual life. Midnight services—mission services—sermons and instructions aimed at this one point, of awakening—exhortations to private confession on the one side, encouragements on the other side to promiscuous extemporaneous prayer—on both sides (for here I perceive little difference) hymns couched in the most fervent and burning language, sung in crowded churches to

the most popular and catching tunes; these are among the instrumentalities, new with the generation, for arousing the languor and stimulating the energy of souls: and many clergymen, with a judgment but half approving, are goaded into such excitements, by a dread of reproach, or for the chance of what may come of it—because they feel that the tide of the times is too strong for them, or because they would not run the risk of counteracting (if it be so) the current of grace.

Brethren, it would ill become one man, and that the least worthy, to doubt where others are confident, or to set himself to check in the church what may be a sign of the advent as well as a token of grace. But I will dare to remind you that excitement is at all times a two-edged sword—having a reaction of death as well as an action of life. Excitement may stir the sleeping soul, from its dream of safety and selfishness, into that waking vision which is the sight of God. Without excitement, the life may sleep on, and the glare of instant judgment be its first serious summons to reflection and righteousness. On the other hand, excitement cannot *be* the life of any man. In itself it is, if not the mocking counterfeit, yet at best the distant echo of truth. Try yourself by its residuum. What is left of it when the fever-fit is over? What is left of it, to do battle with 'the spiritualities of evil'—to enable you 'to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand?'

Advancing life makes us daily more grateful, as for the correction of exaggeration vouchsafed to us in the Bible, so for the counteraction of excitement secured to us in the prayer-book. I venture to think

that the calm and grave tone of our liturgy is the soundest and healthiest utterance for every public meeting for worship. I do not know the feeling or the aspiration which cannot find in those pages its most appropriate language. I know—it is on record in the biographies of Christians—that the loftiest and most experienced souls have declared the worship of the congregation according to the prescribed forms of the church of England to have afforded them their most transporting moments of personal communion with God. There is that in those well-known, those long-tried, those thrice-consecrated pages, which forms at once the protecting shelter of a young and timid devotion—guarding it from all reproach and all suspicion of a presumptuous or hypocritical forwardness—and also the guidance and help of a maturer and more established piety which treads the way of God with a firmer and surer footing when it is following in the track of saints militant once, now glorified. If more than this must be, let it be rather when the chamber door is shut behind thee, and thou art alone in the presence of God and His Spirit.

'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.'

Brethren, we picture to ourselves—for we have seen it in youth—the life which should reproduce here that to which St Paul calls us. It is a life preparing for, not precipitating, the maturity which lies beyond it. It is the life of a learner, not a teacher; of a worshipper, not of a priest. He whom I present to you for a model is carefully guarding his own life from idle follies, from youthful lusts. He knows himself to be sowing for the

great reaping—'shame and contempt,' or else 'the brightness of the sun.' He is a student, in secret, of his Bible—he reads, and marks, and prays. Whatsoever he is assured of, he speaks—that, that, and nothing more. He dreads above all things the idle talk of religion, which 'makes others offenders,' and offends itself. Yet he suffers not unchecked in his presence the uncharitable, the impure, or the irreverent speech. He is brave, because he is honest, and because his profession has not outrun reality. Diligent in work, blameless in conduct, earnest to know, resolute to make progress—sympathizing out of a pure heart with the erring, out of a true heart with the doubting—afraid of no evil tidings, from scientific camp or sceptical, because 'his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord'—thus he occupies the ten talents of this (for him) holy and happy training: 'in the courts of God's house he is planted, and he shall bring forth more fruit in his age.'

XVI.

SCORN A BREACH OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

Matthew v. 22.

Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

WE have here an example of the legislation of Jesus Christ. His kingdom must have its laws. This necessity is not superseded either by the freeness of the grace which saves, or by the freedom of the life into which it gives entrance. The Christian man has no thought of meriting either the favour of God now or the acceptance of God hereafter. But the very fact that he is saved by grace implies that he is to walk in newness of life; and for instruction in the meaning of that word 'newness' he must look to the Lord of the 'life'—to Him who has said, in reference not only to the mysteries of the future but to the duties of the present, 'Behold, I make all things new.'

The forgiven man needs instruction. For want of it, though it lies there in the gospel—for want of it, though to prayer and meditation it would unfold itself in minute direction—for want of it, though the Saviour lives to minister the Spirit, and casts out none who come to Him—he lives immeasurably below the standard of the great confession, stumbles day by day along a path which might bask in light, and pays the penalty

in a thousand regrets and remorses which make a perpetual demand upon the treasury of the inexhaustible grace.

Now the legislation of Jesus Christ might have taken an altogether new departure. It might have begun with new terms and new definitions: it might have discarded existing rules, and struck out a path for itself, in which the words 'grace' and 'spirit' and 'love' might have taken the place of all mention of particular sins and particular duties. Such a course might have been more evidently original: it might have brought to an earlier or more direct issue the conflict between law and gospel: it might have been more satisfactory at first sight to persons whose bitter experience recorded the weakness of nature and of the fall in the face of commands and prohibitions addressed to an erect posture and a free will.

But no reader of the gospels, no student of the sermon on the mount, can say that our Lord passed the sponge over existing systems, and avowed His intention to subvert either natural or revealed religion as He found it ready to the hand of a teacher come from God. In His first and most systematic discourse upon divine and relative duties, He takes the decalogue as His subject; selects some of its separate commandments for comment and illustration; and shows the operation upon it of a higher law of life, in which the letter is subordinated to the spirit, but which makes no pretence of replacing the actual and the practical by anything that is unreal, visionary, or transcendental.

The decalogue was the transcript of natural duty; expressing, in strong bold outline, what man owes

as a creature to his God, and as a fellow-creature to his fellows. This law can never be superseded: but it may be illuminated, it may be transfigured, it may be breathed upon and breathed into and re-inspired by its Author.

'Not to destroy, but to fulfil,' was the office of Christ towards the law and the prophets. Not to demolish, but to fill—not to take down the fabric of the old, but to bring into it the presence which shall occupy each chamber with a life at once divine and most human—this is the legislation of Jesus Christ, and the text is one of its most beautiful and characteristic examples. He comes to rescue this commandment, the sixth of the decalogue, from the literalism of the scribe, from the fantasticality of the Pharisee, and to lift it into the spirituality—the thoroughness, that is, and the practicalness—of the new, the gospel life.

He begins by bringing together (as in some following instances) the commandment and the gloss. The strong sturdy prohibition, 'Thou shall not kill'—one of the ten thunders of Sinai, so stern and tremendous that 'they who heard entreated that no word might be added'—had fallen into the manipulating hands of a later Rabbinism, and received the feeble appendage of a literalizing enactment, 'And whosoever shall kill shall be liable to the judgment.' Thus translation might hesitate, not without apology, between the 'to' and the 'by' in this Greek dative. 'It was said' to 'them of old time' is true of 'Thou shalt not kill.' 'It was said' by 'them of old time' might suit better the clause about liability to the judgment. We have indeed, if we examine it, not one nor two but three speakers

in the sentences here before us. There is the divine word—there is the human gloss—there is the God-Man interpreting the one and removing the other. God spake, man added to it, 'but I say unto you.'

We pause for a moment upon the majesty of the claim here advanced. It is the assertion of a right to supersede all human authorities: it is the assertion of a right to stand side by side in authority with the divine Legislator Himself. The divinity of Jesus Christ waits not, as some would persuade you, for later developements; waits not even for the fourth gospel and for the evangelist St John. It breathes in each page of the first gospel; in the sermon on the mount, with its 'I say unto you;' in the parable of the tares, 'The Son of Man shall send forth His angels.... The field, His field, is the world;' in the revelations of the last day, 'The Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations.'

'Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.' The nearest court of resident Levites shall sit in judgment on him, and shall condemn. This was all that the scribe had to say upon this sixth statute of the decalogue. All was dull bare prose: there was the crime, and there was the punishment—the act done, and that which came of it. Who troubled himself to go deeper? Who busied himself about the sin, when he had dealt with the crime? Who cared to dive into the depths of the heart, who cared to penetrate into the recesses of the life, and interest himself about the poor disconsolate creature of God that had sinned and must die? Still more, who cared to draw out of his sad record something that

should be of use to fellow-men, to keep them off the shipwreck-rocks which had been death and hell to men of one blood and of one nature with themselves?

Not the scribe nor the Pharisee. Their little office was magnified when they had settled who should sit upon this case, and where. But Jesus Christ, 'the Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief'—could He stop there? Did He not care who sinned, or who died for it, provided the court were correct, the process exact, the punishment certain? Therein lies the difference between Him and them. 'I judge no man. I came to save the world.' And to save is to forewarn. Beware then of this or that within thee which will drive thee upon this quicksand. 'I say unto thee,' interpreting the sixth commandment of the decalogue, 'Whosoever is angry with his brother'—yes, 'his brother,' if he is a man—he has committed murder. Anger is murder. Cautious scribes have interpolated here the reservation, 'without a cause;' just as other scribes have inserted 'easily' before 'provoked' in the divine pæan of charity. They recalled perhaps the saying, 'Be ye angry and sin not;' and thought that moral indignation ought to be expressly exempted from the condemnation of anger. But moral indignation needs no such saving clause. Moral indignation never shed blood; or, if it did, it was not murder. No, the anger of which Christ speaks under the head of killing, is, of course, sinful anger. Let the local court, let the seven Levites or the three and twenty Levites, deal with that.

But the peculiarity, the originality, of our Lord's statute of murder, lies here—not in the mention of anger, but in the 'Raca' and the 'Moré' which follow it.

Anger is of course unchristian. The lowest court can judge of that. There is no need to carry its questions to the capital. The justice-room of the nearest borough can deal with them. Not because they are trivial, but because they are obvious. Who does not see that selfish, violent, ungoverned anger is a breach of the sixth commandment when Christ's light is let in upon it? Let us go on—let us go deeper. Let us go to the 'Raca' and to the 'Moré.'

The word 'Raca' has had several interpretations. It may mean—it probably does mean—'empty' or 'silly.' Some have found for it a more precise application. They have given it the sense of one who errs in doctrine, and have found encouragement for this suggestion in the reference of the case to the council or Sanhedrin. Some have gone on to take 'fool' in its occasional derived sense of 'atheist.' 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' And thus we should have that climax of insult of which we hear too much in these days; and the man who calls his brother 'Raca' will call him 'heretic,' and the man who calls his brother 'fool' will call him 'atheist,' and we shall have a graduated scale of affront and calumny, by no means indeed imaginary or unreal, but introducing perhaps one of those too exact, too antithetical parallels, which forget the dignity of the divine Speaker in the smartness and sharpness of a human repartee.

We may not be able accurately to distinguish by shade of colour the 'Raca' from the 'Moré.' Enough that they are distinguished in the word of truth before us. Lighter, less harsh, less contemptuous, evidently, the one is than the other. We can all feel a difference—there

is one—between calling a man simpleton and calling a man fool. We can imagine our Lord saying, Whosoever shall say 'simpleton' shall (in gospel antitype) go before the Sanhedrin: it is an offence against love, an offence therefore against the God of love—it shall not go unpunished. Whosoever shall say 'fool' shall go straight (in gospel antitype) to the Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, in which idolatrous Israelites once sacrificed to Moloch, and which a royal iconoclast defiled afterwards with burnt bones of men.

Never let us strain holy Scripture, the words of Jesus Christ, into a rigid compliance with rules of artificial rhetoric. Let us acquiesce in a climax less than perfect, in an antithesis less than startling. There is a wisdom above man's wisdom even in 'the foolishness'—an apostle has gone before us—'the foolishness of God,' as well as a strength above man's strength in His 'weakness.'

This we can see—and it is enough—that between the first example and the second of the motives of murder we have passed from one region, from one climate, into another. And if between the second example and the third it is not so; if the 'Raca' and the 'Moré' are separated rather by degree than by kind; if a gulf is fixed between the one and the two, and but a hair's breadth be discernible between these two; yet is our moral clear and our guidance certain: we have passed from the motive of anger into the motive of contempt, and the two contempts are at least distinguishable, while the fact that 'scorn can kill' is brought out with terrible emphasis in the combination of the two.

To make scorn worse than anger in the region of

malevolent passion—at all events, to hunt the malevolent passion from the covert of wrath into the cavern of contempt—is at once an instructive lesson, and a striking feature of the gospel. It was said to the ancients, as they quaked before the mountain of the terrific presence, 'Thou shalt not kill.' 'But I say unto you,' the church bought with my blood, 'Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the council; and whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.'

We are not to suppose that it is the *word* 'fool' which is the thing really prohibited. Such an interpretation would be an example of that Pharisaism against which the text itself is directed. Christ Himself used the word. 'Ye fools and blind' was one of His own appellations of the Rabbis of that day. This indeed would not of itself sanction our use of it. He who knew what was in man had a right to all words—and to this amongst them. There is here before us an instance of the power of the Bible—of our own English Bible—upon the language and upon the conscience of the people. The word of this text is under a ban. Men who do not think much of Jesus Christ, men whose conscience is not sensitive to right and wrong, pay an unconscious homage to the prohibition of one particular term of contumely; would shrink from using, would not be suffered to use in decorous society, one to another, the arrogant, the insolent, the exasperating word 'fool.' But it is of the thought rather than the word that our Lord speaks. Whosoever shall *think* of his brother 'thou fool' shall be a transgressor, shall be a murderer, in the eye of God.

There is no scorn in the gospel. It might be said indeed, Is there then unreality? is there complaisance? is there flattery? is there a double tongue and a false pretending? How, without this, can I help thinking 'thou fool' of half the men and the women who meet me in society?

We are not to call folly wisdom, any more than we are to 'put darkness for light or sweet for bitter.' It is implied everywhere in the Bible that a diagnosis of folly is possible; that we are not intended to be credulous, to be promiscuous, to be either blind or false, in our observation of character or in our intercourse with mankind. There is a truthfulness of seeing and estimating, there is an instinct, and a duty also, of self-preservation, which presupposes a sort of judgment upon characters, and without which it would be idle to have it written in Scripture—it is one text amongst many to a like purpose—'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.'

But who does not feel that this is a different thing altogether from scorn?

Scorn is, first, arrogance, and then cruelty.

It is the second of these which gives it its place here, as a breach, in spirit, of 'Thou shalt not kill.'

But even this rises out of the other. Cruelty itself is first pride. What enables thee to injure thy brother? What makes it possible, makes it endurable, to thee, to make that other life wretched, or to stamp it out? What but that thou art greater and nobler, more valuable and more necessary, than that other? Who stops to ask himself, What have I that I did not

receive? who made me thus, and another thus? Scorn forecloses such questionings: the 'thou fool' in the heart makes the life selfish and the dealing disdainful.

Yes, there is a deeper thing than anger even in the slaying. The wrath would not rise, for some wrong done to the self-love, for some standing in the way of my interest or of my honour or of my love, for some supposed slight put upon me or affront offered or rivalry threatened, if there were not first in me that idea of importance, that notion of superiority, that conceit of self, of which the natural vocative for the other being is, 'thou fool.' Then the self-thwarted becomes the self-avenger, and the little insignificant unimportant life must go down before the one which is so large and so essential.

Thus it is that the prohibition before us ranges itself under the statute of murder. Scorn is murder. Witness the examples of which India under English rule is fertile. The ruling race, in its heart, says 'fool' to the native. The arrogant thought cherished becomes insolence, becomes violence, becomes homicide, under provocation, and marvels if it must be tried for it. But why cross the seas for our examples? Where is not the contemptuous thought ready to be oppression, ready to be murder, if it had scope? That superfluous, that trivial, that inferior life, what matters it? let me insult it, let me trample upon it, let me put it out, if it is very much or very obstinately in my way.

We have sought to bring into view the first meaning of the precept—its connexion with the sixth commandment—its scrutiny of the motives of murder. But we

feel, as we speak, that there is a deeper truth and a yet more instructive lesson behind.

Anger and contempt point towards murder, while we think only of the body. But is not He who thus traces murder to its source enlarging also its definition? It might seem to require some ingenuity to connect the red hand of the murderer with the inward thought of the heart, 'thou fool.' But not so when we think what it is, in Christ's sight, to kill. Not when we remember His own saying, 'Fear not them which kill the body.' There is something else which can be killed. There is the life's life of the man. There is the bright vigorous intellect, ever bracing itself for new marches and new conquests, and needing for their achievement an atmosphere in which it can breathe, and a sky under which it can enjoy. There is the warm loving heart, eager for affection, quick to offer, quicker to respond; the heart of which sympathy is the life and coldness the destruction. There is the informing, animating, quickening soul; the thing in each one of us which struggles upward, makes for the light, wills the good, feels the force of right, accuses itself for its failures, rises or would rise from its falls, feels that it has a purpose in being, would not perish without having done its work, would not be extinguished till it has both shone and kindled, would not depart hence till it knows the 'whither' and the 'to whom.' Surely, when our Lord Jesus Christ made the 'Raca' and 'Moré' murderers, He was teaching a new lesson as to the real and the unreal killing. He was elevating our idea of life and death, quite as much as He was showing how contempt, no less than anger, may prompt to homicide.

In this point of view, how instructive becomes the prohibition of so much as the thought, 'thou fool.' What is it which depresses and beats down the intellect, when it would march and learn and know? Who are the unsuccessful teachers, the inefficient lecturers, in our schools and universities? Are they not the conceited self-satisfied men, who cannot put themselves even in imagination on the level of the learner, who make him feel himself accosted as a fool, and by being so accosted made so? Who are they to whom we owe the earliest and (after all) the most substantial acquirements, the very tools and implements of all subsequent progress, of all later attainment? Who but the loving sister or mother who fostered the nascent intellect by an encouragement which put growth into it?

And what is it which stunts and dwarfs and deforms the yet higher life in all of us, the life of feeling and the life of love? What is it which has sometimes turned the generous warm-hearted boy into a fastidious, discontented, loveless misanthrope? What but the contempt with which his earliest tenderness was treated by the being upon whom it was lavished not wisely but too well?

But what is it which kills the soul—longing to live the life which hath immortality, longing to receive, longing to communicate, blessing? Is it not this—the calm quiet 'thou fool' which just looks at us the evil eye; which silently, civilly, courteously implies the ridiculousness of our even attempting, even wishing, to be either this or that to any one living thing that moves or creeps or crawls upon this earth? Or, if we look within, and think not of the desire to benefit, but of the

soul's hunger and thirst after righteousness; is it not, here again, scorn—scorn not spoken, but given to be understood—which quenches inside us the smoking flax of grace, the spirit for brave resolve, the trust in One not against but for us? Who is it that helps me to be better? Is it not the man who believes in me—or, if this cannot quite be, the man who expects, the man who hopes, for me? Yes, the man who knows or makes room for my poverty, my ignorance, my fault, my sin, yet, because He also knows of a love stronger than hate, and a strength prevalent in weakness, feels, and lets me feel, that there is an omnipotence in the self-despair?

We see then, by the opposite, that the man who thinks scorn of me is maleficent towards me if not malevolent; that he who so much as thinks at me 'thou fool' may be the murderer in me of that which is my life.

The Scripture precept makes no exception when it says, 'Honour all men.' It counsels not unreality, complaisance, or flattery. It says not, There is in all men something to admire, something to compliment, something of which to say, 'It is good, it is beautiful, let it alone.' But it says this, There is no living thing—made to live, kept in life, by the Self-existent and the All-wise—to which any other living thing shall be justified, shall be even true, in saying 'contemptible' or in saying 'fool.' In each living man there is something to honour, were it but the fact that he has his life from God. In each there is something to respect, could we but find it; something to hope for, could we but discern it; something to work from, could we but

get at it. Were it but the misfortune of home or education, of circumstance or companionship, of temperament or temper, of defective powers or mind deformed, surely the more privileged, the more advantaged, ought rather to honour than to contemn. This it is which makes ministry possible; yea, the ministry of the dying bed, or the ministry of the condemned cell. The image of God, discoloured, defaced, sin-stained, sin-corroded, is there still beneath all; beneath the wickedness, the cunning, the falsehood and filthiness, of a whole life of sinning: and it is the secret, it is the power also, of the God-taught, instead of scorning, instead of saying to this lost brother, 'thou fool,' to find out that image, and to make it find out itself.

Suffer, brethren, the word of exhortation. Wherever there is power, wherever there is advantage, there is the capacity at least, and the temptation, of scorning. Our Lord addressed Himself to no imaginary, no improbable audience, when He bade His disciples to beware, as they loved Him, of the rising thought of scorn. We have called it the temptation of power; yet with equal truth it might be called the very touchstone and criterion of weakness. The young schoolboy can despise his fellow for having a less fleet foot or a less cunning hand than his own; can even make a mock at the halting gait of the cripple, or the faltering speech of the paralytic. He lives to learn the unkindness, the ungenerousness, the unmanliness, of such contempts: the growth of real strength corrects instead of fostering the self-conceit of inexperience. It ought to be thus in all things. It ought to be thus with all contempts: they ought to be outgrown with the

growth of the man; they will be so with the growth of the real man—the man of mind and heart, of soul and spirit. But this growth is often capricious, often intermittent; and infantine babyish judgments survive into full stature and even into hoar hairs.

There is a scorning which parades itself in smart writing, and which recommends a tone of contempt as an accomplishment of the intellectual. There is an affectation of sneer and sarcasm, but too easily caught, and but too attractive to the young. There is a quick eye for the ludicrous, and a ready tongue for satire, and a lively imagination to extend the bounds of the ridiculous till the landmark is removed altogether between profane and sacred, which are irresistibly alluring to some natures, infinitely more sparkling and more impressive than the speech of simple truth and the judgment of honest charity.

Even they who rise above these coarser influences of the scorner have a danger of their own in that very superiority. How severe oftentimes is the verdict of a moral young man upon a weaker or less disciplined comrade. How little mercy does he show to the promise which comes to nothing, to the effort which failed to succeed, to the faint hand which (in Scripture phrase) 'smote thrice and stayed.' How readily does he pronounce upon the hopelessness, the good-for-nothingness, of a character which yet has to live out its days, and has to go afterwards to the judgment. Let him lay to heart the warning of Jesus Christ, that he who says to his brother, 'Raca' or 'Fool,' may even be that brother's slayer. These are just the severities which make hell enlarge herself. Let the brother of

firmer mould and more established virtue be the helper and not the sentencer of the lagging dallying companion. The day may come, even to him, when he shall find his own utmost strength 'like the tow when it toucheth the fire' in the face of some yet invisible influence which shall try his very life of what sort it is.

But not virtue alone, religion also, has its scorning. We can understand, we can respect, if we cannot sympathize with, every honest conviction of doctrine or ritual: we cannot respect the arrogance which makes another an offender for a word, catches at the mispronunciation of some shibboleth of protestantism, or looks down upon a hair's breadth departure from the tradition of a (so called, but often self-styled) catholicism. It is the 'Raca' and the 'Moré,' in these matters, which bewray them: right or wrong in themselves, they are wrong certainly in the positiveness and in the disdain.

'Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.'

O, if the Eternal Son—O, if the Holy Spirit of God—had said to fallen man, lying in his vice and lying in his ruin, 'thou fool,' where had been hope, where had been redemption? Jesus Christ saw in him the Father's handy-work, knew that the Creator could re-create, and came forth from Him to do it. The Holy Ghost saw the ruined being lifted and re-created, yet needing the perpetual presence, the unwearied indwelling; and though the thing to be indwelt was hospital and prison and mad-house in one, He hesitated not to give up the two milleniums or the six milleniums of a divine

heaven, that He might wrestle with the obdurate, and, one by one, bring again the lost.

And the Father—the holy and almighty yet most merciful Father—He was in the One, He was in the Other: He gave, He sent: He sympathizes, and He will save: and thus the precept, 'Thou shalt not kill,' becomes the fact, 'This my son was dead and is alive'—angels in heaven are enabled to sing a new song over sinners repenting, and one man after another falls on the long sleep, saying, 'I know whom I have believed: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.'

Divine scorn is a contradiction in terms: let us make it to be so with the human.

XVII.

THE SYMPATHY OF GOD A NECESSITY OF MAN.

St Mark iv. 38.

Master, carest Thou not that we perish?

In a dangerous storm on the capricious inland sea of Gennesaret, a little boat, occupied by thirteen persons, is crossing from the western to the eastern shore. The waves are beating into the ship, so that it is now full of water: and One, evidently the leader of the little company, is in the hinder part of the vessel, not helping, not cheering, not sympathizing with the rest; no—asleep. It is He who suggested the crossing; He, who, when the evening of a long toilsome day was come, had said, 'Let us pass over unto the other side.' In some sense then He was to blame for the peril. Why had He not foreseen the winds and the waves, and postponed the voyage at least till the morning? They had trusted Him—not wisely but too well: and now, instead of feeling for them in their distress, He lies there taking His rest; lies there asleep. The sting of the danger is in that sleep. If He were awake, and alive to their trouble, they could have borne it. They were always ready to follow Him; sometimes they thought they could die with

Him. But that He should be indifferent to their alarm, that He should be able to sleep through it, this was unkind, this was unlike Him. Half in astonishment, half in reproach, they at last awaken Him with the question, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?'

Miracle and parable are but differences of name in many places of the gospels; and it is so here. That crossing, that storm, that sleep, that awakening, all were typical: real as facts, significant as emblems. They have all been acted again and again in human lives, in spiritual histories. Redemption itself is just that—a world's misery, a world's sense of neglect, a divine sleep, a divine awakening: 'the times of that ignorance God winked at;' at last He interposed for deliverance, rebuked the wind and the sea, and would have all men everywhere to be saved.

'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' is one of those graphic and pathetic touches which we owe to this second gospel. The other evangelists are contented to say, 'Master, Master, we perish;' or, 'Lord, save us; we perish.' St Mark, preserving (it may be) a reminiscence of St Peter, who was himself present on the occasion, gives that which we seem to recognize at once as the exact expression; represents, at all events, the precise point of the feeling, in this 'Carest Thou not?' is it nothing to Thee whether we live or die? hast Thou no thought for us who have left all for Thee?

There can be no doubt that, even amongst human beings, it is an immense aggravation of any calamity to feel that it is not cared for. To suffer unregarded, neglected, unloved, with cold careless eyes looking

on, or closed in idle sleep which one touch of sympathy would have prevented, is a thing differing in kind as well as degree from any suffering which has love or even pity as its companion.

The expostulation of Gethsemane, 'Couldest not thou watch with me one hour?' was the utterance (in part at least) of a human distress. 'Made in all things like unto His brethren,' the Man of sorrows was expressing in that pathetic interrogation the very thought breathed once, with apparent but only apparent reason, to Himself, 'Carest Thou not that we perish?' Even He, proving in all things His deity by His humanity, was human also in this, that He accepted, that He even yearned for sympathy, and could say, in the agony of the sin-bearing, to one from whom He might have looked for compassion, Carest thou not for this 'horror of great darkness,' for this fear of death which is fallen upon me?

All have known at some time the double sadness of a bereavement which, for any reason or for none, has lacked sympathy. Sometimes there has been a character veiled from all but its very nearest and dearest. Surrounding friends, even friends near as a brother, have not been admitted to the privacy, or have not been congenial to the disposition, of the person whose departure has created, just for one heart, a perpetual desolation. And how has it jarred upon that one heart to hear the vague condolences, to receive the inadequate, the half unreal lamentations of those who compassionate indeed but cannot sympathize with the individuality of the orphanage or the widowhood which must go with the one mourner to the grave.

Thus is it in all experiences: we see it even in the vilest. The hisses and execrations, even the curses not loud but deep, of a condemning mob, have had power to add bitterness to the last horrors of a public execution. For these have been the infallible evidences that no man compassionates; that over those fathomless, those gloomy waters there plies no vessel of commiseration. These have brought home to the dying criminal the awful conviction—more awful than any death—that no man cares that he perishes.

On the other hand, there is no fear and no anguish and no form of death which may not be soothed and mitigated by the presence of a generous, heart-deep, selfless sympathy. It is no stretch of imagination to hope that some softening influence may have communicated itself to the hearts of those shipwrecked mariners of yesterday, in the sight of pier and beach swarming with agonized beholders, powerless indeed to help but strong to feel, and assuring them by look and sign that there were those who cared if they perished. And it is no imagination at all, but the simple record of certainty, that those brave miners of a Welsh valley, whose very names are become within these last weeks household words for England, found hunger itself assuaged by the first sound of hands and voices busy for their deliverance; found in the being cared for, long days ere that caring could ensure the rescue, a relief from the chief horror, of desertion and desolation, such as bore up through nine days of suspense the sinking spirits, and would have made death itself less than intolerable, just by reason of the same peculiarity of human nature, to which indifference

is the sting of suffering, and sympathy the very life of life.

It is this known instinct of nature which makes the last offices of nurse and physician, of pastor and friend, so powerfully ministerial to the bed of inevitable inexorable death. It is this which has added the last touch of misery to deaths died in abandonment or exile, where there has been none to catch the last sigh, to breathe the name of home, or to point the eye and the heart upward to that opening heaven where the Son of Man standeth at the right hand of God.

But in the instance before us there was a more than human sympathy missed and craved for. And thus it carries our thoughts into a region above that of earthly brotherhood, and suggests some reflections, not unsuitable (I trust) to the occasion, upon the complaints and expostulations of humanity itself in the ear of 'a God that hideth Himself' and a Saviour seeming to slumber.

It cannot be denied that there are many facts and many experiences in the life of this world, which irresistibly suggest the question whether God can be waking, or, if wakeful, caring. To try to enumerate such phenomena is as needless as it would be painful. We cannot but read this sleep of Jesus Christ, in the boat tossed by the waves, with His disciples standing by, wondering and half murmuring, as intended to represent the world-wide age-long mystery to which we are pointing.

It does seem wonderful, not only or chiefly that there should be pain, disease, and death, in the earth—earth being what it is in the matter of sin: for we cannot but

feel that it would be more wonderful still, a real offence to faith, a real stumbling-block to virtue, if a sinful were not also a suffering creation: but how, in the confession of the book of God itself, all the foundations of the earth are thrown out of course by the existence of sin upon it, and by the perversenesses, mismanagements, and self-contradictions, which are the growth and fruit of that primary fact of evil. 'Carest Thou not,' we are tempted to say to the divine Ruler Himself, that, whether it be by a moral murder or by a moral suicide, we Thy creatures are perishing?

And even if this mystery of the existence of evil were explained or palliated, it would still be wonderful how evil should be allowed to spread and diffuse itself, where there was either no freedom of choice on the part of its victim, or even a will to resist if the strength were but present. We see the ancestry of evil tainting to remote generations an offspring which had nothing left for its inheritance but the memory of crime and sorrow. We see a leprosy of shame and vice corroding the very walls of houses, in which nevertheless women and children must drag out their miserable being, though to do so is to be involved in consequences of which they are not originators but victims. Nay, we see, here and there, efforts made, difficulties encountered, battles waged, in the vain endeavour of some helplessly entangled life to rid itself of those fetters of evil which it had no share in riveting. How can all this be—we vex ourselves with the question—if indeed there is a God at once of holiness, love, and power, superintending, ruling or even over-ruling, a world which He caused to be and which He keeps in being? 'Carest Thou not,' we find ourselves

asking, as we suffer or as we look on, 'Carest Thou not that we perish?' Is it possible that neither the violence nor the malignity nor the blasphemy of wicked men should evoke the interference, were it but for the protection of the innocent, of a God living and waking, a God on the side of right, and a God resistless in power?

These questions are as old as the fall, and we have learned in some measure the lesson of patience concerning them. But when the experience comes into a man's own life, he finds himself still asking, 'Carest Thou not that I perish?' Painful it might still be to suffer—pain and suffering are but names for each other—painful it must be to live uneasy days, in body or spirit, through poverty and its circumstances, through disease and loneliness, through fears and fightings on spiritual subjects, through cavils of doubters, and taunts of scoffers, and all the thousand tortures of a busy and inventive infidelity: painful this must be, whatever its shape and form: yet even this is not the worst thing. If I could see in all this a kindly purpose—an end and an aim like that spoken of by the patriarch, 'When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold'—I could bear anything. I can understand that I want a sharp discipline, of scourge and cross, to cure me of my levity and my vanity. I can understand that I want earth's lamps darkening, one by one, to make the light of heaven precious or even real to me. The dreadful, the intolerable thing is, to be left alone in this process; to be allowed to fancy myself the sport of chance, the plaything of destiny; to see no hand guiding and no finger pointing anywhither, and therefore to be con-

stantly driven, by stress of searching winds and lashing waves, to look towards the unseen Presence, and say, 'Carest Thou not that I perish?'

We might go still further, and say that the sympathy of God is more vital to us even than His omnipotence. The disciples accepted the perishing—in other words, the non-intervention of Christ to save: what they could not accept was His not caring. In its influence upon the heart, to care is more than to save. Love is more than power, even in the divine. We must not make light of any one of the attributes: it is the combination of *all* the attributes which indeed forms our very conception of God. To suppose God all else, and yet limited in point of power, cannot seriously be allowed without robbing ourselves of His deity. But it is permissible to go all lengths in pressing one by one upon our hearts all His perfections. And to-day we have before us His sympathy. We are dwelling upon the thought how essential it is that He should care for us; how absolutely nothing can make up to us for the absence of that care. Far better would it be for us, as spiritual and immortal beings, to imagine that there might be some opposing and thwarting impediment in the way of the present exercise of God's attribute of omnipotence, than that there should be any defect or any coldness in His love. If we could believe that the true explanation of the present confusion was this—that the power of evil, though doomed, is not yet actually subdued and subjugated to the might of God; that there is a real warfare going on, such as the Apocalypse paints to us, between two empires of light and darkness; that, so far from being

asleep or being indifferent, God is conducting a campaign, as for defeat or victory, against the united rebel forces of dragon, beast, and false prophet; and that, though the final issue is certain, the last field is not yet fought, nor captivity yet led captive—this would go far to reconcile us to the conditions and the experiences of the present; for it would at least secure to us His lively wakeful sympathy with every soul's struggle and every life's agony of our own: it would explain to us, as far more than a parable, that revelation of joy in heaven over each sinner that repenteth, of ministering spirits sent forth thence to watch over the heirs of salvation: it would lay to rest, thoroughly and for ever, that bitterest and cruellest of all suspicions, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?'

And when a man has made up his mind at all costs to believe in the divine care for him—and when we say 'at all costs,' we mean at the cost of supposing some temporary limit to the present exercise of the divine power itself—he will find, as he casts himself, day by day, upon that love and that compassion, that, for him at all events, however it may be for the universe, the power is already sufficient too. He may still be unable to add one jot or one tittle to the old arguments about the existence of evil; he may count it more reverent, as well as more true, to say, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain to it;' but he will find that the difficulty is no longer, for him personally, a moral difficulty; he will find that prayer does bring him the needed comfort and the needed help—as his day, so his strength is—beginning with the axiom, 'Thou, God, carest,' he passes on into the experimental

conviction, 'There is none like unto Thee, O Lord: there is not one that can *do* as Thou doest.'

This is the present privilege of all who, for good or ill, cast in their lot decisively with Jesus Christ. Though for these, as for others, the theory of life is still dark and baffling, the practice is like the light shining more and more till the perfect shall come. On the hypothesis (as men speak) of the gospel, the reading of the great riddle is but a question of time. For each particular life committed to it the mystery is unveiled already. 'Yet a little while, and He that cometh shall come,' makes patience—patience and hope—patience, hope, and courage, these three—the sum and substance, the sufficient stay also, of the life that is. For others it is not so. On the life that has undertaken itself, its own charge, its own guidance, its own solution, the shadow lies heavily, and must lie, and the sun goes down in gloom. Whatever may be the eventual consolation of the race, that life has placed itself outside it. It has no evidences to add to the stock of hope, it has no encouragements to carry to the account of patience. To it the one only enquiry must be that of the text. As it marks the deepening anxieties of men and nations—as it hears of tottering faiths and despairing deathbeds—as it watches for the morning that comes not, and elaborates constitutions, divine and human, which refuse to march—it can but look upward into the inscrutable impersonal heaven, and ask, Thou, if there be One in hearing—if all be not vague chance, shifting change, or inflexible law—if there be any One above, intelligent however silent, 'carest Thou not that we perish?'

The question might have been asked with some force of reason—may be propounded still for such as believe not—were it not for that divine intervention of which we have but just passed from the annual commemoration. The very reckoning of our years, little as we may notice it, reproves and forbids the expostulation of the 'not caring.' It may be possible to exaggerate, certainly to misrepresent, the effects, as already realized on earth, of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ: it is impossible to overstate the argument of the sympathy and of the love. We may marvel at the slow march of the gospel towards the conquest of nations; at the backward steps, here and there, of its beneficent influences; at the regathering of clouds of sin and misery once dispelled; at the imperfect success everywhere of that message of peace and holiness which ought by this time to have spread a new life over the face of the whole earth. We may feel, and we ought to feel, the responsibility of this failure as lying individually upon all who profess, but do not live, the gospel. We may go so far as to say that mankind is still perishing, though the light of day has searched out the chambers of imagery, and made it no longer excusable to sit or to walk in darkness. Like the disciples on the sea of Galilee, we may feel ourselves in jeopardy, the gospel having failed to work in us its saving work, and rather revealing than dispersing the gloom of sin and death.

One thing we cannot say—that our Master cares not. If He had not cared to save, would He have left the glories of Heaven to be born of a woman, to be made one of us, to share our weaknesses, temptations, and sorrows, to be despised and rejected by His own,

to stoop at last to death, even the death of the cross? Certainly He cares if we perish. Say, if you must say it, with the scoffer, that He attempted the impossible, that He miscalculated the comparative forces of antagonist good and evil, that He failed in His great adventure, that He lived and died in vain. Say, if you must say it, with the scoffer, that He was conscious of failure, that He felt Himself defeated, that He died broken-hearted. At least you cannot accuse Him of not caring. He took it upon Him to deliver man, He came upon earth, He endured the contradiction of sinners, He submitted to the last agonies, that He might help, that He might redeem, that He might regenerate, those who cared not for one another, those who cared not for themselves.

And though we can, if we will, perish in spite of Him; though a salvation by force is no salvation, and a soul that will slay itself can, and a fallen nature can always remain so, or sink lower and lower by successive acts of willing till it reaches that awful, that mysterious ruin to which holy Scripture gives the name of 'the second death'—this need not be. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a sufficient salvation: 'to the uttermost' is its watchword: not by force, nor in spite of us, but with the consent of a will made willing, He can justify and sanctify, He can strengthen and bless and save.

If ever He should seem to sleep through our sorrows, or to be indifferent to our prayers, this is but to try our faith, to sober our lightness, to quicken our earnestness: soon will He arise and rebuke the wind and the sea: at last, for one and for another, 'He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.'

'Carest Thou not?' has a voice for the disciple as well as for the Lord. It reproves the lazy loitering, the purposeless sauntering, the silly dreaming, in which so many of us pilgrims and voyagers pass this responsible, this anxious lifetime. Not to care that we perish is suicide—not to care that our brother perishes is murder. Christ cared, God cared, that we might care: and yet, as I look within, as I look around me, I find almost nothing that expresses, almost nothing that is consistent with this anxiety. I see lives given to this one thing, the making themselves easy and soft and luxurious. I see minds relaxing themselves by every sentimental, sensational, sensual study. I see souls, not so much bravely encountering questions of doubting, on purpose that they may know and on purpose that they may judge, but rather indolently suspending everything, as though doubt were wisdom—as though it were an evidence of power to be fertile in cavilling, cruel in unsettling. O if we would be thoughtful! O if we would be considerate! O if we would work! O if we would care!

'Give me one serious man' was the French statesman's challenge. 'Give me one,' we will echo it, 'who cares if he himself—cares if his brother—perishes.'

Standing this day on the margin of an undiscovered future; hearing Jesus Christ say to us this morning, 'Let us cross to the other side;' knowing, yet not knowing, what that other side means—a condition, at all events, of mind and heart, different from, yet made by, the present—let us gather all our energies for the mystic, the allegorical crossing. Let us resolve, like the disciples before us, two things—that we will obey the summons as His, and that we will take Him with us.

This if we do, we need fear no evil; no, not if the weeks of this term should contain in them the transition from health to sickness, from life to death.

No stranger can visit unmoved those solemn memorials, of marble slab or painted window, which keep fresh in your cathedral church the loved names of young men called suddenly, by accident or fever, from amidst the energetic movements of academical life into the stern realities of an everlasting hereafter. They live still—there, and here: there, we trust, resting, serving, knowing, learning, worshipping, aspiring; here, in salutary admonition for those that come after, bidding them to be ready always, remembering their Creator in the days of their youth.

This may be, for any one of us, 'the other shore' to which Christ to-day is calling us: it may be so, even if no one thinks it.

But at all events change will be busy in this congregation, even within the short space of one term. O how many may have passed, by a few short steps, before its close, from faith to scepticism, from prayer to silence, from comparative innocence to a guilty conscience. Who can pretend to be confident, who can dare to be light-hearted, as he launches forth to-day for a shore veiled in mist, over a sea big with storm?

Let us all thank God that there is One who cares if we perish. Let us pray Him so to keep us in every going out and coming in—so to watch over us in the hours of toil, of converse, of resting—so to order all things for us, study, thought, influence, companionship—that we may never perish, but continually grow in grace and in the knowledge of Himself our Lord and our God.

XVIII.

A NARROW PLACE—AND NO TURNING.

Numbers xxii. 26.

A narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

THE goal is in view. Balaam is approaching the city of Balak. The waste road begins to be bordered by vineyards, and the vineyards are exchanged for the narrowing lanes and alleys of the suburbs. All is well. The first scruples of conscience, the preliminary objections of religion, the troublesome warnings of the night vision, have been successfully surmounted; and now the famous diviner, with his convoy of princes, sees before him in near prospect the rewards, in wealth and honour, of his exciting enterprise. Nothing can now hinder, nothing can long postpone, the royal favour, the national gratitude, for which he has suffered something and risked his all. There is a flutter of elation, an intoxication of delight, proper—peculiar, I had almost said—to that victory of the worse self over the better. The struggle is over, the die is cast, the offended conscience hides its wrath in its tent, the after-taste of bitterness, the hell of remorse, bides its time and follows after. We are in the pleasant pause between

the lusting and the sinning, not in the painful pause beween the sinning and the suffering.

It was thus, we imagine, with Balaam, as he rode forward that day with God's license (as he read it) to 'go with the men.' We shall not enter to-day—for our purpose is different—into the character of this strange being—this wonderful compound and mixture of a man—or into the ethics of God's dealing with him. Writers and preachers have dwelt in all times upon the history of Balaam, as it stands forth on the sacred page in its mingled mystery of scruple and daring, of a heart-purpose of sinning and a conscientious reluctance to sin without permission. We see in Balaam the type of all who (in the phrase of a later Scripture) first set up their idol and then come to the prophet; who first put a stumbling-block before them and then enquire of God how not to stumble. Such a man gets his answer, short and sharp, from the oracle of those 'first thoughts' which in matters of duty are commonly far more trustworthy than the second. 'Thou shalt not go with the men. Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.' He gives up the journey. But there is a restless querulous longing, which, though it has given up the journey, has not given up the lusting nor the murmuring. New messengers, 'more, and more honourable'—new solicitations, stronger and more imperious—are allowed to re-open the question; and then conscience, which has spoken once plainly, shall speak the second time in riddle and almost by contraries. 'If the men come, rise up and go with them.' Whose was the fault if that second answer was penal? Who was it who treated God as though He were such an one as himself,

and thought to win by importunity a license which had been refused to simple enquiry?

Brethren, this third Sunday after Easter brings before us, in the new order of lessons, the marvellous episode of Balak and Balaam; a mere enigma, as to its spiritual import, in many congregations—but in this congregation vocal, eloquent, monitory, alike to the elder and to the younger. I take one single point in the narrative, and it cannot be expressed more forcibly than in the words read as the text.

Three several times the angel has stood in the way; impressing the awe of his apparition upon lower natures, upon irrational creatures, only not upon its human scope and object. What a parable of the insensibility of sin—how it renders a man blind to sights, and deaf to sounds, which are visible and audible to any one and anything that is innocent. 'The dumb ass' pays the homage of fear to its Maker. Only the prophet—only 'the man whose eyes are open, who hears God's words and sees the vision of the Almighty'—he alone is deaf and blind. Why? Because the spell of a sin is upon him. Is it not written, 'According to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath?' The thing done, the thing meditated, may have displeased the Lord: the anger may be astir, the wrath may be powerful: to use the prophetic imagery, the deep may utter his voice, the right-aiming thunderbolts may be abroad, the sun and the moon may stand still in their habitation: yet the sinner can sin with a light heart through all, because he who fears not God regards not God's anger. The brute beast saw where the seer saw not. Instinct ranks below reason: yet instinct uncorrupted is above reason corrupted, even in its perspica-

city, even in its intuition. If reason will debase herself—will use (she need not) her prerogative and privilege of sinning—then the steed and the rider change places instantly in intelligence, and the morbid subtlety of the rational sinks, even in range of vision, below the unsophisticated simplicity of the animal. The dumb ass sees what Balaam sees not.

But the patience of the divine antagonist is not yet exhausted. Once, twice, and thrice, He goes forth to withstand. Now the adversary 'goes further, and stands' at last 'in a narrow place, where there is no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.' This will be a decisive battle. No longer able to 'turn aside into the field,' or to 'thrust herself unto the wall,' the ass now 'falls under Balaam'—and yet he sees nothing. The eye so cunning in its foreview of destiny, so keen to descry the coming fortunes of Edom and Amalek, is dim and blind to the personal vision, to the champion whose controversy is with *him.* Not till 'the Lord opens the eyes of Balaam' can he discern the angel in the way, and the drawn sword in his hand.

Yet why that drawn sword? Do you suppose that God fears the malediction of that soothsayer upon the chosen people? Could any words from that sin-clouded soul do injury, against the will of God, to the march of that cause which had in it, however veiled and shrouded, the world's welfare and the salvation of mankind? Surely we read here the will of God that not one sinner should perish; His merciful pleading with a man bent on his own ruin; His special intercession with a man of great gifts, that he turn them not into woes and into curses; but also His gracious dealing with men of all

sorts and of all times, through the countless instrumentalities of Providence and of the Holy Ghost.

'A narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.' That is my parable.

It will scarcely be denied that there is in all of us a sensitive shrinking from what may be described as the coming to close quarters with God Himself.

It is so, first and above all, in the soul. A twilight life satisfies us. That middle thing, between night and day, is the utmost of our faith and of our hope. We have settled nothing. Nothing is beyond the reach of doubt. I cannot go forth with this weapon or with that, for I have not proved it. Suspense is my best. I have not given up Christ. I have not decided against the atonement, or the resurrection, or the judgment. I have not made up my mind that there is no Holy Spirit, or no Christ, or no God. O no. Sometimes I am half persuaded that there is: then I doubt again. Meanwhile nothing passes or can pass within me, between my soul and its God, on the basis of revelations which to me are peradventures. My spiritual life is of necessity a blank. My worship, in secret or in the congregation, is a mere concession and compromise. I am terrified lest enquiry should land me in infidelity, and therefore I pacify myself, I lead a quiet life, by the help of a few forms. I keep infidel books shut; I expel atheistical doubts as intruders; I speak slightingly or condemningly of unorthodox writers, lest I should be shaken or distressed or suspected, and in the hope that a respectable Christianity may last my time.

Who shall tell in how many cases the attraction of multiplied sermons and services, in how many cases

the attraction of charitable employments and religious societies, in how many cases the attraction of controversial reading and semisecular preaching, lies just here; namely, in the shelter thus afforded to a condition of real distance and aloofness from God Himself? That disease to which nothing can effectually minister but a resolution of the man's own will to break through at all costs every dividing barrier, and to deal with God as a real Person whom to know is eternal life, is soothed and palliated, to a heart ill at ease, and a conscience not yet laid on sleep, by a multiplication of observances which are a tribute (at least) to religion, and of activities bearing the likeness (at least) of the Christian. Still the direct dealing tarries: 'the narrow place' of the personal encounter is not yet reached.

These are soul's avoidances of the divine contact. Others are of the life.

Many are they whose one struggle it is to elude decision. While they can 'turn aside,' into field or vineyard, from the obstructing angel in the highway, it is well with them. They would settle no matter. That which presents itself in the light of duty paralyzes them. To do, or to leave undone, because it is right, and for no other reason, principal or subordinate, whatsoever, is an offence to them. It is inconvenient, it is discourteous, it is uncivil, for anything to address them in that tone. Many questions of duty, these say—as the former said, all questions of faith—are not to be faced, they are to be encompassed. 'Edom said, Thou shalt not go through—wherefore Israel went round.' They will not encounter the question, whether this which they do is right, lest they should be constrained to forego it. All

the world does it: it would be eccentric, it would be arrogant, to be singular: take it for granted. This is the history of all dishonesties in trade and of all laxities in professions. It is not only in the region of belief, it is quite as much in the province of action, that we dwell amidst a multitude of open questions. We do every day a number of things, about the wisdom or unwisdom, about the right and the wrong of which we are in suspense. We let them pass for the present: some day we will settle them. The whole detail of our lighter and less serious employments, the whole sphere of relaxation, of society, of expenditure of time on amusements and of money on self-indulgences, is this uncertain, conjectural, haphazard world for thousands. Meanwhile we follow the multitude—to do good, or to do evil.

These postponements of determination involve consequences. They lead to a desultory, vacillating, shambling life, if not to the one thing worse. A thoughtful man feels that even mistakes, even errors of judgment, are less serious than that sort of life which is the accident of an accident. Without affecting a judicial solemnity on every small particular of doing or not doing, he makes up his mind upon a few principles, says nothing about it, but keeps them till he finds better. The opposite character disparages rules, has no wish to be consistent in trifles, would rather live from hand to mouth in things insignificant, and sometimes wins applause or conciliates liking by the loose easy way in which he deals with the little moralities which are so influential in their bearing upon the general colour of the life.

Nor is it only in small things that this indecision reveals itself. Human life is full of it in reference to the gravest realities of sin and duty. Men who are both orthodox in opinion and unimpeachable in dealing may yet exemplify this very duplicity in that secret existence which lies altogether (we are fond of saying) between a man and his Maker. It is the very definition of bosom sins. They are sins kept back from God as much as from man. They are often indeed prayed against—even as Balaam could not let his avarice be unmentioned between him and God—but their peculiarity is, that somehow we always get leave for them. Either they are so trivial, or so natural, or so powerful, or so very very pleasant, that they must have indulgence. We could not go on with religion at all, if it was sternly severe with them. We like Christianity itself—it is a fearful thing to utter—because, read as we read it, it seems to hold out a hope of countless forgivenesses: at last, at worst, of a deathbed repentance.

Now God is the adversary of all these subterfuges. He must be so. It is half the work of the Bible so to present Him. His attribute of truth makes Him so. His attribute of holiness makes Him so. His attribute, above all, of love makes Him so. When we start on our journey, having persuaded ourselves that we have His license for sinning, He must—or He would not be God—'go forth to withstand.' The drawn sword is very terrible, but it is more than armistice or olive-branch if we will have it so. God wills not the death of the sinner, and therefore He must meet him while it is day.

It is as though he sought us first of all in places where we might evade Him. That face-to-face in-

evitable encounter is so terrible that He would spare us if we will let Him. Many a 'smiting of the steed,' and many a 'crushing of the foot,' is witness to these minor, these avoidable meetings. Yes, we are angry with friend and menial, we show discontent in our countenance, and visit it upon our companions, when we have a suspicion that God is out in our way, and that He is against us. The gentlest admonition, the tenderest hint of warning, suffices to rattle up the sleeping lions of pride and wrath against the innocent one beside us, who meant nothing but love.

And yet the long-suffering of God is not ended. He would have won us or He would have enticed us back—but we would not. Now He must 'go further.'

I cannot express, as I would, the lifelikeness of the story. Not all the profane jests which have been lavished on it have made it less solemn to me or less sacred. This 'narrow place,' what is it? What is it, I mean, in human life, and in the thing for the sake of which 'all Scripture was given by inspiration of God?'

I will tell of three 'narrow places' in human life, where God cannot be evaded.

1. And the first of these is suffering. I am well aware that I stand before a congregation exceptionally circumstanced. A large proportion of that audience which I would ever in this place keep prominently, predominantly in my view, might say, with an emphasis scarce elsewhere to be rivalled, 'The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' It is not here that a sermon upon affliction would be the most suitable, though we forget not how early may be

the visit of pain to the life most favoured, or how keen oftentimes are the sorrows of that age to which of necessity they come as strangers.

There is no one here present who has not had some foretaste of suffering. I ask you to recall that moment of pain, mental or bodily—that one day or one hour of sharp torture, whether it was an agonized nerve of the body, or whether it was an accusing pang of conscience, or whether it was the funeral of a parent or sister, or whether it was the unutterable fear of the doom of a lost soul—recall it, I say, for one instant, in order to answer this question, Was it not the characteristic of that suffering to make you real—to unmask every lie in which you had been walking, and to say to you, Two words are true—God, and the soul? This is why we make suffering one of the three 'narrow places' out of which there is no side-turning—in which, hand to hand, the battle of existence must be fought out.

The suffering of one man is no suffering to another. The loss of a dog or a bird may be anguish to one. The loss of father or brother may be no anguish to another. But all have some vulnerable part—a 'heel' at which the poisoned dart may find entrance—and it is of this that I speak, whatever it be for you, when I speak of God meeting a man in suffering.

A great writer has beautifully drawn out the mystery of suffering in its bearing upon conversion and the Christian life. What would sin become without suffering? Imagine a world in which no barrier, no dyke or dam were opposed to the full-flowing river, to the ocean spring-tide, of vice and corruption. Suffering is that obstacle. You cannot sin beyond a certain point—and

what that point is you cannot foresee—without some penalty or some retribution.

To one man the narrow place where the drawn sword meets him is the terrible trial of disappointment. Early perhaps in his educational career he was marked out as the one man for honour. Every voice gave him by anticipation the chief prize and the foremost place. He suffered no presumptuous confidence to make him idle; every faculty was exerted, every sacrifice was made, the day of hope dawned—a sudden illness barred him from the race, or an unforeseen rival stepped in and took his crown. Such experiences stop not with youth. An illustrious advocate, whose fame was equal at the bar and in parliament, was cut off by pining sickness just as his hand was upon the great 'bauble:' he, and not he only in that profession, had to learn that 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men—He putteth down one, and He setteth up another.'

To another a yet sharper stab is needed to make him feel. The narrow place for him is dishonour. Above all things that man dreaded the finger of scorn. He thought himself safe from it—so high was he in universal repute, so carefully had he stopped up each hole and each cranny of discovery. In secret he sinned, and in secrecy he trusted. The will was weak till at last it was wicked: one thing only kept in check the maturity of his wrong doing—not the fear of God, but the fear of the world. Then, if he will have it so, that shall be his suffering. In that 'narrow place' God must meet with him, and the very beast which he bestrides shall fall under him with terror. Happy if in that darkest hour he shall recognize the true character of the antagonism

of God—how that it is not more compelled by sin than motived by love.

To another, cast in a finer nobler mould, there is no suffering like that which is spiritual. He has played too long with scepticism. He has felt anxiously and sensitively the difficulties of believing. He has postponed decision. He has never discarded, but he has never substantiated, his Christianity. It has sufficed for him, in the sunshine of ease and prosperity, to go with the multitude, to pray shallow prayers, and to utter unmeaning praise. But now he wants it all. Something has brought it to issue. Is it true? will it bear his weight? can he live by it? can he die by it? still more urgently, can he be holy by it? will a prayer be heard, uttered on the strength of it? There is no turning aside, to right or left, from this one awful question; and no suffering on this earth is comparable in intensity to its decision. Happy he who in that cloudy and dark day, shall discern the person of his adversary; shall see in Him the God of love, come to convince, to convert, to save.

2. But I cannot, in this congregation, pretend to be unaware that the 'narrow place' in which God constrains the decision of His creatures concerning Himself is most often indeed the fiery trial which we call temptation.

There are men, I suppose, who pass through this life ignorant of any temptation but that negative, colourless, unimpassioned thing, which bids them to-day, and again to-morrow, to be indolent, languid, and worldly-minded. But without disregarding such tendencies as if they were matters of indifference to the everlasting state, we would

think rather at this moment of another and surely a larger class of our fellow-men, to whom temptation comes in a shape distinct and unmistakable, a hand-to-hand battle, and an instant and perceptible defeat or victory.

We have known men of business, trusted with the property of a multitude of defenceless families, to whom the question has come suddenly, and must be answered on the instant, between an honesty immediately ruinous to themselves and a dishonesty eventually destructive to thousands. We are not unaware of the plausibilities by which the latter course may excuse itself; plausibilities of vague hope and fortunate accident which might make fraud advantageous and frankness calamitous. We would not be hard upon those who have found themselves unequal to such an emergency, and have been visited with a retribution upon which none can gaze with stoicism. Only we say that such an alternative was exactly one of those 'narrow places' where God meets a man, to constrain him to a decision between sin and duty. It is enough to give seriousness to the life we live and to the very world we dwell in, to know that such issues are daily decided, publicly or in secret, with results so wide and so important for good or evil.

But that which happens once in a lifetime to a few, is in substance the oft-recurring trial, through forty or fifty or sixty years, of a vast multitude of men such as we are. We are all prone to sin—and the question, to sin or not to sin, is presented to us, day by day and night by night, in forms perfectly definite, and of which memory may suggest to us a thousand examples. We love to slur over the mental process by which

we pass to the commission. But, as it is true that 'no temptation takes us but such as is common to man,' so also it is true that 'with every temptation' God, if we will look to Him, 'makes a way of escape.' If we sin, we sin thus far deliberately, that we have an alternative proposed to us, and that we choose the wrong. In every temptation God presents Himself, and there is no evading the question between sin and obedience. Pray that our eyes may be opened, in that anxious, that brief moment, within which the will passes to the one conclusion or the other—often with the full consciousness that it is weighing and judging—to see the divine adversary, whose enemy in reality is the sin not the sinner, and to pray Him on the instant to guide our decision, making us then and there victorious through Him that loved us.

3. There remains yet one 'narrow place' in which we must all meet God. The hour of death.

The experiences of the past week have made very real to us the parable of that 'narrowness' from which neither to the right nor to the left is any way open. Those five men imprisoned for nine days in that dark subterranean chamber of which the giant forces of earth, air and water held and kept the key—what were they but examples, in very deed, of a helplessness, of an impotency, which must one day be our own, whensoever and by whatsoever instrumentality it shall please God to bring us, one by one, to the last end of this wonderful, this mysterious state of being?

We speak very ignorantly of that untried future, and the fewest words concerning it may be the wisest. But, as many of us have been called, in the course of God's providence, to stand on its threshold, in some sorrowful

parting, or even in an approach of our own to the actual experience; so we must all within a few years taste death for ourselves, and ought not to do so without many previous endeavours to grasp those thoughts of it which are profitable for the living.

'A narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.'

Very new to the strong man, very repugnant to the nature of any man, must be that compulsion, that passivity, that involuntariness, to which the text points. To have, for the first time, 'no way to turn'—neither exercise of choice, nor application of remedy, nor appeal to help; to know for ourselves the force of our Lord's saying to St Peter, 'Another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not;' to be unable to command one moment either to do one thing left undone, or to cancel by act or entreaty one single thing done, through all this life-time; to be compelled to go, quite alone, into a world of which we know next to nothing, with only God, long disobeyed and dishonoured and sinned against, to look to and to trust in; this must be formidable when it comes close to us, however we may put it aside or sleep over it in the dim distance.

But there is one thing which all say who have had to do with deathbeds—with any deathbeds, I mean, which are not utterly (as some are) stolid and stupid—and that is, that the look of a sin is quite different to the dying from that which it wore for the living; that the reality of it, and the freshness of it, and the wickedness of it, and the terror of it—and the way in which distances of time and space are annihilated, and the thing itself is seen, just as it was done, multiplied by a thousand

doings, and magnified by a thousand aggravations never dreamed of in life—is something inconceivable without experience, something which burns itself into the very soul of that loving pity which is absolutely incapable of lightening or mitigating. 'A narrow place, where was no room to turn to the right hand or to the left.'

A cry once reached me from a very young man's deathbed—and I would to God that I could make it audible to-day in some listening ear, as it never can perish again from my own—'If a man sins again and again—and then prays again and again—and then sins again and again—what can happen?'

Let us ponder that question—so characteristic of the 'narrow place,' and the no exit and no turning, which has been our subject. Let us trifle no longer with that last end, nor with the journey which leads to it. Let us see that the life and the death be of one piece and one colour—faith in Christ washing white the one, faith in Christ making bright the other. 'Blessed are they that have here washed their robes, that there they may have right to the tree of life.'

XIX.

INDIVIDUAL INDEPENDENCE A COROLLARY OF REDEMPTION.

1 Corinthians vii. 23.

Ye are bought with a price: be not ye the servants of men.

CHRISTIAN character is a Christian evidence. We all feel it so in the present. For one man who is made a Christian by argument, a thousand men have been made Christians by what St Peter calls 'conversation without word;' conduct, that is, observed, felt, interpreted, without any direct preaching, or any express reference to the proofs or precepts of the gospel. A Christian mother, a Christian wife, a Christian daughter, has been the evangelist of many a sceptical mind, of many a careless life. It may be, with some who listen to-day, that every obstacle to infidelity has been surmounted but one, and that one is the bright example, the sweet influence, the beautiful life, of a dear person left at home yesterday, without whom immortality would not be heaven, yet with whom he who would spend eternity must spend it in the presence of Jesus Christ.

It is not only contemporaneous character which thus turns for a testimony. There is one person, laid on sleep eighteen hundred years ago, who is still a puzzle

and a difficulty for the sceptic. His writings are still in our possession, as surely authenticated as any commentaries of Cæsar or any letters of Cicero. They tell us what he was and what he became; how he began as an enemy, and how he was changed into a disciple; what was the Christianity which surrounded him, what was the faith and the life of the church which he entered and of the churches which he planted, what were the thoughts and the hopes which bore him up under toils and trials and temptations innumerable, in the experience of isolation, disappointment, and imprisonment, in the suspense of an ambiguous event, on the very eve of a violent death.

St Paul's witness for Christ can only be neutralized by one hypothesis. It is the hypothesis adopted by Festus—'Paul, thou art beside thyself.' 'Has it ever struck you,' said a most unwilling sceptic of to-day, 'that St Paul was mad?' Yes, it struck Festus, it has struck many Festuses of this generation, that that busy brain had overwrought itself, that excitement had done its unsettling, its upsetting work upon a constitution feeble perhaps originally in body, and liable, like that of most thinkers and writers, to disturbing and disarranging influences in the province of the intellect. St Paul was an enthusiast, and an enthusiast is a visionary, and a visionary is next door (at least) to a madman—there we have the key to that history, that 'whirlwind out of the north,' that 'great cloud,' that 'fire infolding itself,' to use for a moment Ezekiel's imagery, which has had so many influences and so many consequences in the world of the church and in the world of mankind.

When I am staggered for a moment by an expla-

nation, which yet I feel to be no explanation, of the phenomena to be accounted for, I open the volume of St Paul's epistles at some place like this 7th chapter of his letter from Ephesus to Corinth, and I ask myself, Is this the visionary, is this the fanatic, is this the madman, whose inquisition is proceeding? Do I read in this chapter the *indicia* of insanity—in this calm, level, well-balanced discussion of a perfectly matter-of-fact subject, the subject, namely, of mixed marriages between heathens and Christians, and what is to be done under the circumstances for the best interests of the individuals concerned, of Christianity, of society, of humanity itself? Let us imagine the reference of this question to a mind really disordered. What could be more plausible than to say, 'The entrance of the new faith into a family must of course pass the sponge over preexisting relationships. Man and wife cannot live together if the one is to sit at meat in an idol temple and the other is to go out before day (like the Bithynian Christians of Pliny and Trajan) to 'sing a hymn to Christ as God' and to bind himself by a 'sacrament' to be altogether holy. Whatever the unbelieving partner may wish or urge, the Christian at all events can have no choice and no hesitation. Regardless of consequences to spouse or children, he, or she, must go forth from that dwelling, on pain of perdition, shaking off the very dust from the feet.' I can scarcely doubt that this would have been the language of some advisers; nothing, I believe, but the express direction of St Paul in this chapter keeps it from being the language of some advisers now, even as between Christian and Christian, as between the more and the less worldly, as between

the more and the less devout, of two persons, both baptized and both worshipping. Or, if to stay, to stay under protest, and as a compromise, and with conditions laid down, or with a perpetual look of ten thousand disapprovals. It needed great judgment, the exercise of unusual discretion, the establishment and application of very difficult principles—and in this instance without any direct aid (as he says himself) from revelation or inspiration—to lay down those great rules which he who runs may read in this chapter. If the unbelieving will go, he must go, but he shall be the one to go; the Christian shall stay if he can stay: think of the children, 'sanctified' (as St Paul writes) in the one parent believing; think of the husband, think of the wife, as the case may be, who might have been saved ('how knowest thou?') by thy staying, whom thou prejudgest, foredoomest, by thy going.

In the paragraph immediately before us St Paul has passed from primary to secondary relationships, from the domestic to the social, from questions springing out of marriage to a question springing out of slavery.

Here also I cannot but think that we have before us the workings of a remarkably sound and sensible mind.

In how many hands would Christianity have become in those first days a revolutionary principle. 'Christian master, emancipate,' 'Christian slave, escape,' this would have been the language of many modern evangelists if they could be relegated into the age when slavery was an institution.

And it is perfectly true that slavery, which is, the ownership vested in one man of the will and action of another man, is an anti-Christian, because an in-

human institution; and Christianity will wage war with it, will at any cost put it down, wheresoever it has free course, whensoever it has had time to make its voice heard and its reasoning listened to. But this influence of the gospel would be mischievous unless it were gradual. The action of Christianity is, first and above all, a spiritual action: it regenerates before it reforms: individual hearts first transformed, then social fashions are ripe for transfiguration.

Meanwhile the gospel has a work to do, which can be done everywhere and on the instant. It can bring into every relation, whether defensible in theory or indefensible, yet at least for the present existing, a reconciling, a harmonizing, a softening and an ennobling power. It can even say, as St Paul says here, 'Art thou called being a slave? care not for it. He that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's freedman. All are bought with a price—let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.'

There is one clause in this context capable of two meanings, and carrying some ambiguity consequently into the interpretation of the whole.

'Art thou called being a slave? care not for it.' The gospel makes even slavery honourable; there is an emancipation of the spirit, which no thraldom can fetter. So far we follow him.

But does St Paul go on to say, as some read him, 'Nay, even if thou canst be made free, use slavery rather?' This, we feel, would be an exaggeration, rhetorical or sentimental, of which St Paul was incapable. This would just make the difference between sobriety and excitement, between religion and fanaticism, be-

tween truth and falsehood. St Paul, be quite sure, would not counsel the slave to refuse liberty if he had the choice. Though the argument carries him to the very verge of this, he knows how to stop short of it. He can say, If you are a slave, born so or made so, care not for it; even in your chains Christ has made you free. But he will not say, Slavery is better than freedom: if freedom is offered, decline it. He will not say it, and he does not. In a sentence otherwise ambiguous there is a tense which decides. The imperative before us is the imperative of action, not of duration.

'Use it rather.' Use *which* rather—the old slavery, or the offered freedom? The Greek, the Greek of St Paul and the Greek of the scholar, fixes the meaning. The 'use' before us is the momentary not the continuous using. 'Art thou called being a slave? care not for it; yet, if thou canst be made free, avail thyself of the chance by preference.' The same calmness, the same balance, which marks St Paul everywhere, marks St Paul here. The Paul of Festus, the Paul 'beside himself,' would have gone on to say, Slavery is better, more humbling in itself, more instructive by its contrast. The Paul of Scripture, the Paul 'at the feet of Jesus,' the Paul of history and literature and world-wide influence, says, Slavery if it must be, liberty if it can: Christ's freedman anyhow, man's too if it may be. 'Ye are bought with a price: be not ye,' if the choice is given you—'be not ye,' even in name—'slaves of men.'

But St Paul's words here before us have a scope much beyond this.

Even in reference to the first subject they mean more than this.

They say, In your estimates of conditions of life, in your ideas of bond and free, be not slaves of words or of men's opinion. Learn a higher lesson. See yourselves in the light of spirit, of reality, of eternity, of heaven. Reckon, not as man reckons, but as God reckons, even in things which might seem to be all of earth, all of time. The Christian slave is Christ's freedman; the Christian freeman is Christ's slave. We have a new nomenclature, we Christians: we unname and we rename all things.

Thus read, the text has indeed a lesson for all of us.

First of all, it sets in a very strong light that event, that fact, that transaction, call it what you will, which we speak of in the general thanksgiving, of which we have just made mention in the bidding prayer, as the 'redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

St Paul makes it the basis of our life. 'Ye were bought for a price.' When Jesus Christ shed His blood on Calvary, He was paying a price, He was purchasing a possession. There were human instrumentalities, we know, engaged in that issue; Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians—Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate. There were also words and acts leading up to it; a ministry exercised for three years on a footing of independence, almost of defiance; irritating, exasperating, challenging, to constituted and self-constituted authorities; works of mercy, utterances of wisdom, claims of dominion, alike offensive to the received ideas, to the popular prejudices, to the religious principles, of the time and of the race. So that, in a sense, the culminating point was reached in the way of natural cause and effect. The crucifixion was an execution: it was the putting away of a trouble-

some person, it was the closing of a vexatious struggle, it was the defeat of a formidable antagonist, it was the reassertion of outraged rights. The will of the sufferer was not consulted, was not expressed, at the moment of the death. 'He was crucified,' St Paul himself writes, 'through weakness.' Yes, and the very glory of the sacrifice was that 'weakness;' that utter self-abandonment and self-emptying; that not clinging, as St Paul elsewhere writes, to the divine 'form,' to the divine 'equality,' but the taking, and the bearing, whatever it might lead to, of the nature of a servant, of the likeness of men.

Yet in that absolute self-surrender, in that permitting to be carried out, without interference and without gainsaying, the human resentments and the human passions and the human cruelties of which the death on Calvary was, in one sense, the natural result, Jesus Christ was, in reality, making a purchase—He was buying back a self-lost, a sin-ruined world. All generations, all individuals of mankind were contained in that purchase. 'Ye,' St Paul writes—people of another land and another continent, Corinthians and Europeans of a quarter of a century after the crucifixion—ye, and if ye, then all men everywhere and for ever—'were bought for a price.' We scarcely need St Peter to interpret, 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ.'

Then, if this be so, St Paul says, first, 'Ye are not your own.' That is one aspect of redemption. Then, if this be so, St Paul says again, 'Be not ye'—for it would be a fraud and a dishonesty, it would be the giving away of that which is not yours to give—'be not ye slaves of

men.' That is the other aspect. It is the one before us in the text.

Brethren, the task of inference and enforcement would be an easy one, were we but sure of all hearts going along with us in the premise, 'Ye were bought with a price.' O, if this were the life's principle of each one; if this were the maxim engraven upon the door, the motto hung above the bed, of every young man in this audience—BOUGHT WITH A PRICE—how simple would be the duty, how prompt would be the obedience, how needless would be the preacher's office, there being what the Bible calls 'such a heart' in each one. Let us think of one or two directions in which St Paul's words would guide us.

Christ's, not man's—such is the Christian. Not his own, to keep or to give away—such is that littleness which is also greatness. Such is that submission which is independence too. Such is that one service which is perfected freedom. To belong to Jesus Christ is to be a man to all else—yes, rightly interpreted, to be a man to Him.

I need not stay to guard against abuses of this saying. I need not stay to caution any one against that idea of independence, which would cut up by the roots subordination, respect, reverence, discipline, education itself. No one seriously thinks that St Paul, or St Paul's Master, is against any one of these. We must look elsewhere for the thing inculcated and the thing forbidden.

1. And first it appears to me that St Paul's words, 'Be not ye slaves of men,' have an important bearing upon the exercise of the understanding. Bought with a price

by One who claims not one part but the whole of you—not more the conduct than the will, not more the energies than the affections, not more the soul (as men speak) than the reason—it cannot be safe, it cannot be right, it cannot be honest, to resign into another's keeping the exercise of the intellect upon matters of evidence or matters of doctrine; to make one man's view, or one man's thought, or one man's faith, serve for ten or twenty or a hundred others; to attach yourself to a school or a party or a system, in such sense that you yourself shall be absolved from the task of 'proving all things' as a necessary preliminary to the other duty of 'holding fast' that which not others but you yourself have found to be 'good.'

We are not ignorant indeed that an opposite course has much to recommend it. A young clergyman, a young theologian, may speak plausibly when he says, 'I am ignorant, I am foolish, I am a child in these matters: let me follow more learned, wiser, holier men. I cannot greatly err, if I err in such company: their society, their church, their heaven, will suffice me: at all events, it is better to go astray with such men, than to be absolutely and altogether at sea alone.'

It is thus that the ranks of party are swollen, and the independence of our Christian churchmanship is sacrificed. If there is humility in such language, there is also indolence, there is also impatience, there is also audacity. For is it not a bold venture, which, disparaging the Creator's apportionment to me, in whatever measure, of His gifts of reason and judgment, chooses another person, whose gifts, being ampler, shall, not assist, not supplement, but overwhelm and supersede and swallow

up mine? You know, or you ought to know, that there are good men on both sides, on all sides, of every thing: you, deliberately or casually, make yourself over to the good men of one. Is opinion then, is doctrine, so immaterial, so indifferent to the soul's health, that you can thus fling it about, thus consign it, thus put it into commission, with a light heart? Have you any right in this matter, to do what you will with that which is not your own? Bought with a price, every part of you, have you any right thus to make yourselves servants of men?

You fear perhaps the reproach, from within or from without, of having a divided mind, a suspended judgment. It is humiliating not to have your views; it is unfair upon others that they know not what to call you. Brethren, I know but of one thing which presses. There is one question which cannot wait—'What think ye of Christ?' Till that question is answered, the ownership hangs in doubt: 'Whose am I? To whom shall I go?' But, when the purchase is realized, there may be rest even in doubting. To doubt about Christ is one thing: to doubt in Christ is another thing. To doubt in Christ, a man must already have believed. To wait upon Him for light, is already, in the best sense, to have seen light. Faith is a life—till we have it, we cannot set out. Till we believe, we cannot enquire—we have none to interrogate or to listen to. But the faith which is indispensable is faith in a person: about things we may doubt and yet live. Many men must live and die in suspense—seeing the good, seeing the true, seeing the beautiful, in two opposites—unable to strike the balance, or to say in so many words, almost about any thing,

That is the truth. Yet the true One, the personal Truth, may be theirs all the time. Having Him, they cannot walk in darkness. Ill were such suspense, such doubting, exchanged for the most confident vaunt of partisanship—I am of Paul, or I of Apollos, or I of Cephas—yes, or I of Christ.

I know it is lonely—few men know it better—to be thus indeed and in truth a man of no school and no party. To have none to cheer or to echo my sayings; to have none to say of me, 'He is a good man, a sound man, one of us;' to have to listen for truth everywhere, and to gather it out of all corners; never to be able to say, 'There, I have got it all—I have builded my house, I have hewn out its seven pillars—admire its neat structure, its fair proportions'—it is not the life of ease. Let it drive me nearer to Him whose I am. He can both whisper to me one by one His secrets, and also give me strength as my day.

2. That which is true of the understanding is true also of the conscience.

'The dispensation of the fulness of times,' the gospel of our divine Lord, marvellous in all else, is most wonderful in this—that it offers to the individual man a direct personal contact with a revealed personal God. 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh...sons and daughters shall prophesy...young men and old men shall alike see visions of God...the very servants and bondwomen shall become temples of God's Spirit.' No longer shall there be a privileged order, whether of priests or of prophets, intervening and mediating between God and the church, carrying His messages and reporting their replies. 'I will dwell in them and walk

in them...I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

Fear not, brethren, any forgetfulness or any disparagement, from this place, of those ministerial offices which commissioned men still bear in the church of Jesus Christ. The same apostle who asserts most boldly the equality of all souls in the aspect of redemption and in the aspect of sanctification is above other apostles the champion of ecclesiastical order, and even makes this the summary of the Pentecostal gift, 'He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' The work of the ministry, the edifying of the body, is carried on in the gospel church by ordained and commissioned men.

Nevertheless—we will say it with all boldness, as those who are bound to speak that which they deeply feel—nevertheless, there is a sanctuary within each one of us into which no minister and no brother can enter without presumption and without profanation. It is the conscience of the man in the sight of God: it is that spirit of the man which no one knoweth but the man: it is the secret shrine of motive and will, of memory and responsibility and of the life's life. It may be instructed, it may be informed, it may be influenced, it may be moved; but in every aspect save one it is free. No dictation and no direction can intrude within its precincts; for one is its Master, even Christ; and all else, even the ministers of Jesus Christ, are here not lords but brethren. To establish over the individual conscience a right of inspection or a right of discipline; to lay down rules for its habitual or periodical self-disclosure; to say, Without this there is no safeguard for the life and no

security for the death—this is to deny or to obscure the great characteristic of the gospel; this is to speak a word against the all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost as the light and the guide, the remembrancer and the comforter, of Christ's people.

Not one word shall be spoken in the tone of vulgar obloquy or vile suspicion, as regards either the motives or the manuals of such as would bring back human confession into the practice or into the preaching of the church of England. It is not with the details, of fact or of possibility; it is not with the modes, of enquiry or of examination; it is with the idea, it is with the principle, that we have to deal, when we apply to this subject the warning voice of the text, 'Bought, each and all, with a price, make not yourselves servants of men.'

We understand something of the arguments, of the reasons, for a confessional. It has much, very much, to say for itself. We are not ignorant of the perils of an unexplored conscience. We can feel for the ignorances, for the indolences, for the procrastinations of self-judgment and self-discipline, which make havoc of so many young lives, and which almost bid us say, Better any treatment than this terrible letting alone. We sympathize with the honest effort, at no small cost of trouble, at no small sacrifice of inclination, to help towards a pure heart and a clean life those who may perhaps fear the scrutiny of man more than they fear the intuition of God, and be roused to repentance and reformation by the help of motives, powerful at least, if inferior.

Yes, if we might regard things only on the human side—as good ideas, useful inventions, powerful instru-

mentalities, and the like—we should be strongly tempted to accept the institution of the confessional, or we might accept the doctrine of purgatory, and think that we had done something to mitigate difficulties or to eke out Scripture. If we looked only at the greatness of the disease, at the difficulty of the cure, we might be disposed to advise any endeavour, however little we might feel it to be sanctioned or authorized from on high. But when we reflect upon it again and again; when we carry the matter to the Bible; when we feel the stress laid upon two things there, the individual freedom and the individual grace; when we think too how easily men may lose the muscle and sinew of their own being by having perpetual recourse to the lifting and the carrying of external assistance; we seem to come back with a sense of relief and of satisfaction to the suggestions of our own church of England, which says, If you are in trouble and cannot find comfort; if you have postponed or intermitted communion because of some weight lying upon your life; or if in the approach of death you feel something burdening your soul, and are afraid lest you should be about to stand before God with a lie in your right hand; then ask the human help of one whose office it is to guide, whose experience it is to sympathize: open your grief to him, receive his counsel: and then, if you feel that it would be comforting to have the promise brought home, to have the 'ye' of the universal turned for once into the 'thou' of the particular, ask him to stand over you and speak to you personally the reassuring word, 'Son, be of good cheer: thy sins are forgiven thee.'

At common times, under usual circumstances, the

church's directory is the pulpit, and the church's confessional is the congregation. There, where the bow is drawn of necessity at a venture, the arrow flies to its mark, the more felt because unseen. There, when the prayer of the preacher and the prayer of the hearer have jointly invoked the guidance which is omniscient wisdom, the 'voice behind' will be heard again and again, saying in each emergency of the spiritual being, 'This is the way, walk thou in it.' There too, in that privacy of publicity which is the special privilege of 'the church gathered in one place,' the heart's knowledge of its own sin and its own sorrow will clothe a liturgy, come down from past ages, with a meaning fresh and lively and powerful; will send up from the individual worshipper a special and specific utterance to the throne of grace, and receive back into itself an answer of peace in which there shall be no 'if' and no peradventure.

Independence of all save God is the prerogative of the conscience. Not in pride, but in deep self-knowledge; knowledge of the difficulty of telling into any human ear the very thing itself that is; knowledge of the perils of spiritual intimacy, alike on the one side and on the other; knowledge of the facility with which an indolent will may pass from seeking help to trusting in man; knowledge, finally, of the infinite strength which comes into us by being quite absolutely alone with God in our confidences and in our struggles; we shall feel, the weakest of us with the strongest, that, on the whole, and with a view to the eternal future, we are best as we are, without confessor and without director save in the Father and the Son and the Spirit, one God blessed

for ever: we shall come back to the text, and think that it has a voice for us in this thing, 'Ye were bought, each and all, with a price—be not ye servants of men.'

3. In such matters we may speak with diffidence, aware that another, even in the church of Christ, might speak differently. But in one closing matter all will go with me: it is when I turn myself to the recollection of the 'life,' and say concerning 'it,' to a congregation of responsible dying men, 'Bought with a price, be no man's slave.'

Naturally we are all slaves, the bravest of us and the most confident. Who has not heard and talked of the tyranny of fashion—how the manners and customs of the world lord it over us, till we are indeed 'not our own;' creatures and drudges of an impersonal fugitive something, which is a power outside us not making for righteousness.

Even inside homes, with other presences powerfully influencing, we feel this, all of us. And in matters indifferent, if such indeed there are, we do well to follow it. To be singular in regions not moral, not involving duty, is at once a waste of power and a lack of sense. We are right, in non-essentials, in mere externals, to do even as others.

But here, brethren, in this strange yet noble life of a great English University, this tyrant fashion bears with crushing weight upon all of us. Sometimes it assails us in the more open forms of laxity of speech or action, of jesting with things sacred, of making light of morality, of making a mock at sin. Sometimes it bids us possess ourselves of that which we cannot pay for—'Every one has it, Every one does so'—regardless of the many self-

denials which made it possible for us to be here, of the many prayers which followed us, of the many tears which will fall over our misdoing. Sometimes it simply bids us trifle; takes a trivial estimate of work, of a career, of the future; bids us neglect instruction, postpone reading, leave every thing serious to the chance and to the accident.

And in all this we think ourselves free: doubly free—free even from the thing that is right—even from religion—even from duty.

Free? St Paul calls us slaves—slaves of men, slaves one of another—of the meanest of us, and the poorest, and the vilest. 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: walk in the sight of thine eyes, walk in the way of thy heart: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee'—not thy brother, not fashion, not the world, but thee, thine own self—'into judgment.'

Therefore it is that I have chosen for you to-day the text, 'Bought with a price—be not slaves.'

'Bought with a price.' Christ bargained for thee, bid for thee, tried and toiled for thee, died, shed His very blood for thee. Let not the scoffer rob thee of that word: thou wilt want it one day.

O, if, when you lie down and when you rise up—if, when you go forth to the chapel or to the lecture-room—if, when you refresh and when you amuse yourselves, in ways which need not be wicked, which only become so when you forget God in them—you would just say to yourselves that word, 'I was bought with a price,' Jesus Christ died for me, Jesus Christ shed His precious blood for me—you do not know what a charm there would be in it. Toil rest, recreation blessing, the

common holy, earth heaven—try it, try it for a day. Say to yourself, There was One who cared for me, had me in His view, ages before I was born; there is One now who looks upon me with love, such love as is not on this earth, so tender, so strong, so living; and He actually paid a price for me—for me, so worthless, so nothing. Yes, if you would do this, you know not what a joy, what a sweetness, would enter into your life. You would not care then, by comparison, what others thought: it would be enough to know this, that, working or resting, alone or in company, joyous or sorrowful, living or dying, you are His. He has thought you worth paying for—which is to say, worth dying for. Shall it be too much to ask of you, that you would just accept that love, just cherish it, just live it, just hand it on?

'Bought with a price, be not slaves of men.' Look not upon their present smile or frown. Let them not own you. They never died for you. Let them not turn and twist you whither they will. Be a man—human, humane, manly, manful—which is to say, a Christian.

O noble independence—the liberty of the man that is God's, and that has God in him: the liberty which is only not licence: the liberty of the son who abides in the house for ever, not of the slave who has no inheritance in the home, and no permanence.

XX.

ONE THING THOU LACKEST.

St Mark x. 21.

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.

THIS paragraph of the gospels is a striking example of that harmony in variety which unfriendly critics love to exaggerate into discrepancy.

Three of the evangelists have preserved the incident. Each one adds something to the completeness of the picture. The wealth of the enquirer is brought into view by all of them; but St Matthew alone tells us that he was young, and St Luke alone speaks of him as a ruler, while St Mark gives several most interesting particulars of the interview itself—the running and the kneeling, the earnestness and the reverence, and the look which Christ gave him, and the love which Christ felt for him; and then again the look which Christ threw upon the disciples as He drew the moral, and the repeated expressions of astonishment with which they received His unexpected words as to the spiritual dangers of worldly wealth. All this variety, so picturesque and so natural, would be ill exchanged, we all

feel, for a dry and sterile uniformity of narrative, taking out of it all the life and all the play, and suggesting the idea of an inspiration merely mechanical, out of which the human element would have departed, and with it (rightly understood) also the divine.

There is, however, in this instance, amongst many variations which are entirely and beautifully harmonious, just one which might appear at first sight to be of a different character.

St Mark and St Luke give thus the question and counter-question with which the conversation opens. 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' Jesus said, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.' St Matthew, according to the best manuscripts, expressly confirmed by the testimony of Origen early in the third century, prior therefore to any of our existing manuscripts of the Greek Testament, gives the two clauses a very different form. According to him the question was, 'Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?' and the answer, 'Why askest thou me about that which is good? there is but One that is good;' as though He would correct the enquiry about a particular good thing to be done in order to win heaven, by recalling the questioner to the one source and spring of all good, in whom alone, sought and found and lived in, can the true 'eternal life' be entered by any man.

It might be suggested that some copyist, jealous for the Saviour's honour, had substituted this reading for the common one, which seemed to disclaim for our Lord the title of 'good.' It is enough to say in answer—apart from the general precariousness of such con-

jecturing—that no such alteration has been made by the same manuscripts in the other two gospels, and that Origen himself calls attention to the variety in this place between the two evangelists and the one.

But we can all see that this is an example, when carefully looked into, not of contradiction, but (which is a widely different thing) of unexplained consistency.

St Matthew omits the word 'good' before 'Master,' and throws the whole weight of the reply upon the word 'good' before 'thing.' The other evangelists say, 'Good Master;' and 'what thing,' instead of 'what good thing,' shall I do? They represent the comment upon 'good' in the answer as referring to the appellation of our Lord Himself in the question. Is there any thing impossible or improbable in the supposition that both accounts of the matter are true? that the question may have been (as indeed the English Version gives it in St Matthew), 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do...?' and that the answer may have touched upon both the uses of 'good?' Why callest thou me good, without knowing what thou sayest—without knowing that One only is good, and that, if I am good, it is in virtue of a divinity which is not in thy thought? And again, Why askest thou about some particular good thing to be done to merit life, when in reality 'good' is not a thing but a Person, and he who would enter into life must do so by knowing and loving and becoming like to Him?

Thus the two narratives may complete, by supplementing, each other. Each may bear its part faithfully in the preservation of the sacred whole. It is not given us, as yet, to combine the narratives certainly: enough,

if we see that one combination, at least is possible—nay, if we did not see it, we could trust the Word of God still.

Who cannot feel, in this instance, the truthfulness, the importance, of each form of the saying?

When Christ says, 'Why callest thou me good?' He certainly does not mean to accuse Himself of sin. On proper occasions He could boldly face His enemies with the question, 'Which of you convicteth me?' Nor does He deny here that divinity which lies at the root of all His sayings, as much in the first three gospels as in the fourth; as much in 'The Son of Man shall send forth His angels,' or 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father,' or 'Lo, I am with you alway,' or 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,' of St Matthew, as in the 'I and my Father are one,' or 'The glory which I had with thee before the world was,' of the sealing testimony of St John. What our Lord does correct in this questioner is the ignorant complimenting which can bestow upon one whom he regards only as a human Rabbi, as a fellow-creature therefore and a fellow-sinner with himself, a title which has its only true place as an attribute of God Himself, and therefore of One whom faith has learned to address with undoubting affiance as 'My Lord and my God.' To meet this young ruler with the unexpected check, 'Ask thyself why thou callest me good; recollect what good means, and to whom alone it belongs?' was one part, we believe, of that discipline in thoughtfulness which his case demanded, and which is pursued with severe gentleness in the whole treatment which follows.

And then, when Christ goes on to say, 'Why askest

thou me about some good act of thine which is to earn heaven? recollect, One, and but One, is good, and in Him, not in thyself or in thy little doings, is eternal life'—do we not read here the correction of a thousand mistakes and presumptions and ignorances which have survived into our own time and into our own religion? Do we not hear Him saying to us, Build not upon the sand, set not up your little towers of self-righteousness and vainglory, but go to the fountain of life, seek Him who is the author of all godliness, acquaint thyself first with Him and be at peace, then come and offer thy gifts, not to win, but because thou hast won, the grace of a free salvation?

We have before us a history, a character, a life: one which has repeated itself many times in human experience; one which may be here to-day, not in the book only, but in flesh and blood.

This young man, immortalized in the everlasting word, was not a phenomenon, he was a type.

We see him so distinctly in his own question, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' Yes, here is enquiry—anxiety therefore, desire to be right, admission that there may be a higher height, a loftier attainment, than the life has yet reached; respect too and reverence for One who is neither priest nor Rabbi nor ruler, who has neither rank, nor office, nor philosophy, nor oratory, but only the two things, sincerity and sanctity, to recommend Him: this there is in the young man, and it brings him where all are welcome who would know and do; brings him running, brings him worshipping, and sets him face to face with Jesus Christ. A solemn moment—for him whose life was then in the balance,

and for thousands and tens of thousands who shall read of it to the end of time.

And this spirit of enquiry, and this spirit of reverence, was no sudden or violent impulse, separate from, and at variance with, the days and years of the past. There was a third thing in that character; a memory of morality, a habit of virtue. There was nothing to call up a tell-tale blush on that countenance, if men spoke of integrity, spoke of purity, spoke (in any form) of duty. There is not a doubt thrown, throughout the narrative, upon the truth, upon the consistency, of the profession, 'All these have I kept.' At the very moment that he is asking, 'What shall I do?' his heart is saying within him, 'What lack I yet?'

A curious mixture, we might say, an improbable combination, of humility and self-righteousness, if we had never read a heart, if we knew not our own. This youth, so earnest, so respectful, so moral, is yet a dweller in the tents of the self-man; he still dreams of improving himself into perfection; he still fancies that, if the fabric of the self-righteousness can but be raised one tier, one story, higher, its top may reach heaven—unaware that its foundation is in the sand; unaware of the great coming storm which shall mix earth and sky. 'Ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish his own,' he has not one thought, as yet, of the 'submission' (as St Paul calls it) which is the first step of life.

He thinks perhaps, when he asks that question, 'What good thing shall I do?' of some little finishing stroke, some last ornament and embellishment of perfectness, which may cost him an effort, but which at

least need not undo or unmake any thing. He thinks, we might say—if the anachronism could be pardoned—of some large gift of money, to mission or hospital, which shall yet leave him something; of some pilgrimage, to shrine or sepulchre, from which yet there may be a return; of some penance, whether of infliction or of abstinence, which may at least leave him living. There is almost nothing, he says to himself in the distance, which he would refuse to bear or to dare for his soul's health: there is even a desire to suffer something if he may but be perfect: name the price, he says to his new Master, and I will pay it—only tell me the secret of a certified safety, of an absolute self-satisfaction.

We might have been tempted, we scribes of the kingdom, to throw ourselves instantly, with all the weapons of an evangelical armoury, upon the radical fault of this sort of questioning. We might have said, 'I perceive that thou art yet in the gall of bitterness,' tied and bound with the fetter of a fatal Pharisaical self-deception. We might have precipitated, as a first duty, the preaching of grace, and called him to seek, 'with strong crying and tears,' what St Paul bids us to describe as 'justification of life.'

Very different, quite opposite to this, is the Saviour's treatment. Instead of arguing, He accepts; takes him on his own ground; bids him save himself; arrays before him the ten commandments—nay, not the ten; just the six of the second table—just those in which the young man counts himself perfect; and so elicits from him the avowal of an entire self-complacency, 'All these I have kept from my youth up,' and leads him to

expect confidently the instant reply, 'Rich for heaven as for earth, eternal life is thine.'

We pause with the character full in view, to contemplate it for a moment with the eye of man. We confront with it two opposite schools of doctrine, and hear the one saying, 'The man is worse than a profligate;' and the other, 'The man is safe, and only wants perfecting.' The one says, Better any immorality than the vice of self-righteousness. The other says, Morality is the *differentia* of human being; give me virtue, and for all else let bigots fight. The one says, No case so hopeless as that which has 'no need of repentance;' which, not having consciously fallen, can dispense with a Saviour; saying, 'I am rich,' is deaf to the counsel, 'Buy of me without price.' The other says, The end of religion is virtue—reach virtue any way, and God cannot condemn.

Against the former of these views is the 'Jesus loved him:' against the latter is the 'went away sorrowful.' It is better to be moral than to be profligate; yet to be moral is not salvation. We must not sever what the text has joined in one—

'Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.'

We shall not suppose, with a whole gospel against us, that Christ here approves as sufficient a legality which leaves out its own first table; which contents itself with half the decalogue; which is, in the first place, morality without religion, and which is, in the second place, a morality of mere negation: not to have defrauded, not to have stolen, not to have murdered, it is enough—enter thou into life, into glory.

Nor shall we force the words given us by St Matthew, 'If thou wilt be perfect,' into a sense utterly unevangelical—'Salvation and perfection are ideas distinct and different: if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments; if thou wilt be perfect, do something besides.' According to this view, and in substance it is the view of a vast and pretentious communion, there are, first, commandments of necessity, and there are, secondly, counsels of perfection: there are requirements for the many, and there are ambitions for the few: it is not necessary to be perfect; something less will suffice: a man may be saved with thus much, if without more he may not shine.

When Christ says to this moral young man, 'Yet lackest thou one thing,' we understand Him to say, 'And that one thing is needful.' He who puts it from him, as either unnecessary for him or unattainable, counts himself unworthy of everlasting life. He who refuses that one thing, and goes away sorrowful because he is not accepted without it, certainly has not failed only in some adornment or corollary of saintship: if he does not come back for it, to Christ in flesh or to Christ in glory, assuredly he has lost himself; having his good things here, he has none to look for across death and the grave.

Yet Jesus beholding him loved him.

There are few words more touching in all Scripture. They mark so decisively the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. Not one that cannot sympathize—no, but one, in all things, 'of like passions with us,' only 'without sin.' The holy Saviour had a 'loved' one among His disciples. He did not command, He did not exemplify,

a dead level, a dull monotony, even of feeling, even of affection. There was for Him a friend among the friends—one chosen among the elect—one heart with which His heart beat yet more sensitively than with other hearts all loved.

But there is more than this in the text. This young man was a stranger to Him. Apart from the omniscience of deity—and this is not now the thing in question—He had no knowledge of him until now. And now that He first sees him, can He altogether approve? Read together the two halves of the text, and the first becomes more wonderful by the combination—One thing, *the* one thing, he lacked; and yet Jesus, beholding him, loved him.

That look, and that love, like all else in our Lord, were full of instruction. Do you suppose that the blessed Lord now in heaven looks with equal love upon opposite characters amongst ourselves—say, upon the young man of pure life and clean heart and beautiful feeling, and the young man whose very soul is 'a cage of unclean birds,' whose tongue is profane, unchaste, or cruel, whose conduct towards his own is selfish, unmannerly, hard, ungrateful? Ought He—we ask it with reverence—ought He so to do? Ought Jesus Christ to confound all differences even amongst those who still lack one thing?

Such teaching is as unscriptural as it is immoral. It would make us shut the Bible if we read it there. It would be an argument against Christianity which all the evidences could not parry. It would be the indication of a looseness and a roughness and a coarseness of judgment, which could not be attributed without im-

piety to the Judge of all men. Because we believe that there is a discriminating quality—and the gospel calls it faith—visible already, in the case of each one, as present or absent, to the eye of God; shall we go on to say that without this or apart from this there is no essential difference between vice and virtue? 'Let the Judge of all the earth do right,' however it may fit in with our ideas or with our theologies. Be not rash in fixing the great gulf—wipe not out the 'Jesus loved' in your zeal to hurry towards the 'One thing thou lackest.'

What a view does this open to us of the love of Jesus Christ now for many a young man, earnest, moral, thoughtful, enquiring, whom yet He cannot excuse—cannot for his sake excuse—from the choice and the decision and the self-surrender, Go and sell—then come and follow. Yes, He loves, and we ought to love, the beauty of the character, the openness of the mind, the cleanness of heart and hand, the reverence of soul and spirit. He loves, and we ought to love, the appreciation of His wisdom, the recognition of His holiness, the admiration of His sacrifice, in many who cannot yet quite say to Him, My Lord and my God. He loves, and we ought to love, the dutiful son, the kind brother, the faithful friend, the diligent student, the bright example—the six commandments kept from the youth up, the eagerness to know, from such as are worthy to tell, whether indeed there be a yet more excellent way into a joy and an immortality believed in. It is no sign of jealousy for Christ's honour to withhold the love He gave, or to mingle in one sweeping sentence the righteous of earth and the wicked. The blessed Lord can discriminate—even His followers should do so—between

such a youth as we have sketched in these sentences, and the frivolity, the idleness, the gluttony, the immorality, which make up its opposite. The heart-searching eye pauses in its survey of the world and its fulness to distinguish and to discern. He beholds and He loves the thing that is good, even where that very love constrains Him to the further saying, One thing thou lackest.

'One thing.' Often have we said, of friend or neighbour, He has but one fault. Perfect in uprightness, in diligence, in devotion, he lacks temper, or he lacks courtesy, or he lacks charity. Perfect in kindness, in consideration, in humility, he lacks strength, or he lacks courage, or he lacks exertion. Sometimes we have to say a more serious thing. So faultless in one aspect, in one half of the man—so tender, so generous, so unselfish, so useful—he cannot quite be trusted when the question is of truth, or of sincerity, or of integrity, or of virtue. He has one fault, and it carries unsoundness into everything. We all know that there are vices which no number of virtues can counterbalance, in the judgment of the world, or in the judgment of the Christian.

Thus the saying, 'One thing thou lackest,' is capable of many applications, some of them qualifying, others condemning. It depends upon the nature of the one thing. There are defects, there are blemishes, there are faults: there are also sins, and vices, and crimes.

We have touched upon the question, Which of the two was it here? And we have been compelled to understand the one want in this case as a fatal want, not in the region of conduct, but in the region of spirit; not

in the region of the world's judgment, not even in the region of the moralist's judgment, but in the sight of God, in the foreview of heaven.

That which was lacking to this young man was, in one word, devotion. Not devotion in the sense of devoutness, but devotion in the sense of self-surrender. A young man who knelt down before Christ in the public highway was certainly not wanting in reverence. We can believe that, not in the spirit of ostentation but of sincere piety, he was one who prayed, many a time and oft, in the synagogues and in the streets. He was on the very verge and margin of a higher devotion still. This was his 'valley of decision,' and he is gone down into it. This day he is to make that determination after which he can never be quite the same. He is asking the question of questions; that question which was life from the dead to Saul of Tarsus and to the jailor of Philippi; that question which filled the church of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and which has been to countless thousands from that year to this the turning-point between two lives and two eternities. But in this case there is a false ring, not of hypocrisy but of self-deception, in the good words. 'What shall I do—what good thing shall I do—that I may have eternal life?' We will not be extreme to mark the word 'do:' it was in Paul's question, it was in the jailor's question, it was in the question of Pentecost and the three thousand. It was only in the ear of Jesus Christ that the false ring was perceptible, and He applied to it a test at once stern and gracious.

God and Mammon are at issue in that heart. It is attempting the impossible thing, to reconcile the two

services and the two ownerships: and when it says, 'What shall I do?' it means, What shall I do that is compatible with being young and rich and a ruler; with being a man of means, and a man of the world? The question itself has a condition lying under it, and that condition gives it the lie in the very asking. Flattery would give a soft answer. Jesus Christ says, 'Sell that thou hast:' fling away thy riches, part with thine all, keep nothing, strip thyself of house and land, of purse and treasure, of importance and influence, of power to give, and power to bequeath; then (if we may for the moment keep the reading) 'take up the cross,' that accursed badge and implement of Roman tyranny, not yet possessing its one tender and gracious association—take it up, as one that shall die upon it, and that accepts the sentence. All is mysterious, all is repulsive, all is terrific to the hearer—one word alone lights up the darkness; one word alone blends severity with goodness—'Follow me.' Be my companion as I tread the way of homelessness and poverty, of reproach and ignominy, at last of torture, murder, martyrdom; share my reviling, desertion and repudiation by mine own; soothe with thy companionship sorrows which thou canst and sorrows which thou canst not partake in; listen day by day to my teaching, drink in my revelation of a life above and beyond this life; print my likeness upon thee, that thou mayest represent and reproduce it when I am unseen. This shall be the present recompense of the self-devotion which I ask of thee. 'A thousandfold now in this time' it shall be to thee for all that thou sacrificest, riches and lands, kinsfolk and friends, honours and affections; 'with'—yes, I hide it not—'with persecutions: and in

the world to come,' just out of sight, just beyond death, 'in the world to come'—promise above all promise—'eternal life.'

This, brethren, is the 'love' of Jesus Christ. It stops not with gilding and refurbishing time, it sets open eternity. 'One thing thou lackest'—thy soul must be athirst till she has it—union with the alone good One, the having Him in thee, the being at one with Him now and world without end. To have this thou must part with all else: in act, if Christ bids thee; in will, at all events, because Christ calls thee. Art thou equal to this? Is thy hold upon the unseen such as to detach thee from the visible?

Brethren, it is the question proposed to us in all things. It meets us when the life of the body is buoyant and jubilant, and the tempter spreads before us the pleasant excess, the luxurious wantoning, the delicious delirious sensuality. It meets us at the great turning-points of life, when the choice must be made, of the profession, of the abode, of the companionship, of the wedlock. It meets us in the rising within us of the jest sparkling but profane, of the retort telling but cruel, of the story amusing but scandalous, of the judgment, on men or things, popular but iniquitous. 'This world' or 'that world' is written for us upon everything: 'Rest and enjoy,' or else, 'Go and sell;' have thy good things, or wait for them; drink of earth's cup, or else, 'take the cross, and follow.'

Who that knows himself shall much marvel at the result of this appeal in the case of the rich young ruler? Was it not something, that he went away 'sorrowful?' Was it not something, that anger, that scorn, that fierce

resentment, marked not the ruin of the hope and the disappointment of the aspiration? Might he not have said, 'Thou dost indeed know how to quench the smoking flax—thou hast indeed the art of despising, of frustrating, the day of small things? I was here ready to the hand of judicious fostering, and thou hast thrown me back into the burning from which tenderness would have plucked me?'

He went away sorrowful. The love of Jesus was wasted upon him for this time, and the gospels which tell of the going tell of no return. The moral, at all events, is thus written. It is not the second chance, it is not the late hope, it is not the 'last first,' which is here recorded for our learning: it is the peril of refusing Christ's call; of saying to Him, 'I will not,' when He bids us follow; of preferring earth when He offers heaven.

Brethren, Jesus Christ has sent us once again this day the word of His grace, saying, Halt no more between two opinions. Defer not for one day the vital decision. Whatsoever it be which stands at this moment between thee and thy soul, cast it from thee. Sloth or cowardice, appetite or passion, bosom lust or besetting sin, renounce, hate, expel it, at Christ's bidding. Rise, He calleth thee; take up thy cross at once, and follow.

What would it be on the last day of life, what would it be on the morning of the judgment, to feel in the awakening conscience this conviction, 'One thing I lack?' Too late to go back to fetch anything out of the house; too late to supply one want or to wash out one sin: much more to relay the foundations of the

whole being, to bring into it a new spring and a new motive and a new aim of life. Who shall risk the hearing then from the lips of the Judge, 'One thing was needful, and that one thing thou lackest?' O let us enter now into that greatest, gravest of questions, 'What must I do to be saved?' and may God, who has all hearts in His hand, dispose each one of us to say, and to mean the saying, 'I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ.'

XXI.

AN HUNDREDFOLD NOW IN THIS TIME.

St Mark x. 29, 30.

There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's,

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

A PROMISING enquirer has just come to the Saviour; has come, and is gone again. Running, and kneeling, as one in haste to be saved, and assured of the power of Christ to save, a rich young ruler has proposed to Him the question of questions, has received a clear answer, and is gone away sorrowful. An exceptional case had required an exceptional treatment: and He who laid no such compulsion upon others of His followers, upon the Zaccheuses and Philemons and Gaiuses of the kingdom, has judged it necessary to lay the compulsion of poverty here: 'Go thy way: sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.'

Something very beautiful there was in the character thus severely handled; for it is expressly mentioned, and in this the case stands alone, that 'Jesus beholding him loved him.' Yet not the less, but all the more for this

love, He dealt truly with him; saw that he was worth saving, and could only be saved thus: the world had so tight a hold upon him, that no mere self-denial, in the way of abstemiousness or almsgiving, would suffice to detach him: by one stroke the chain must be broken, the captive must be set free: if he really wished to be saved, and if he really meant what he said when he called Jesus 'good,' he will bow himself to the hard necessity, and count it more than compensated by the divine companionship of which this is the condition.

But to so lofty, so superhuman an estimate of loss and gain this young man is not equal. He would have joyfully heard how to combine two worlds: but if one world only can be his, then it must be the world of present enjoyments; of young interests, human flatteries, and great possessions.

A reflection upon the terrible dangers of riches is the first moral of the incident. The disciples indeed, more experienced, some of them, in the opposite perils of poverty, with its mean toils and down-dragging cares and ready envyings, exclaim in astonishment, 'Who then can be saved?' If the rich, with their tranquil days and easy fortunes, with every facility for the two virtues of honesty and of thankfulness, can 'hardly enter' God's kingdom, how much less, surely, they whose whole life is trial—trial of patience, trial of rectitude, trial of faith. Thus it is that each rank and each age and each character regards its own as the very chief of all difficulties and all hindrances, thinks any other class or condition better off for salvation, and asks in despondency, if not in recrimination, If that other, that opposite, can scarcely be saved, how, how can I?

But there was one disciple who in those days of his ignorance and self-reliance was ever ready to compare himself advantageously with other men, and who saw in the example of this young ruler going away sorrowful an opportunity of vaunting the opposite conduct of those who, like himself, had counted all things loss for Christ. 'Peter began to say to Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee.'

Our Lord begins His reply to this boast by a warm and generous recognition of the greatness and blessedness of their self-sacrifice. The tone may be faulty—self-assertion is ever unpleasing—but not on this account shall the Saviour for one moment depreciate the devotion on which He shall build His church. There is no man who has done what ye have done and shall not here and hereafter have his reward. 'Now in this time an hundredfold. In the world to come eternal life.'

In the enumeration of the particulars of the hundredfold, we may notice, in passing, two omissions. They are characteristic, we think, of the Master's teaching. The one omission is that of the 'father,' the other omission is that of the 'wife.' The one omission may seem faintly to foreshadow the divine rule elsewhere laid down, 'Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven.' 'Fathers an hundredfold' might have favoured the delusion of a spiritual direction, a human authority, below, such as is utterly at variance with the idea of a dispensation in which, under the guidance of an indwelling Spirit, 'all shall be' individually and immediately 'taught of God.' The mother, like the brother and the sister, may re-

appear, with multiplication, in the recompense: unity is the very condition of the new, the spiritual fatherhood; not even in name or in figure can it be departed from.

The other omission is illustrative, I venture to think, of the purity, of the delicacy, of the Saviour's teaching. He will not even seem to open to His disciples a Mahometan paradise. Sisters a hundredfold—not so much as in parable the other.

Large and generous as is the promise, for this life and for that which is to come, love itself adds one caution to this glowing picture. The end is not yet. While earth is still earth, hope and fear are still indispensable ministers in the church and in the heart. 'Many that are first shall be last, and the last first.' Amongst the original hearers there stands a Thomas that shall doubt, a Peter that shall deny, a Judas that shall betray. A few years hence, on the other hand, there shall be a Mark that deserts in Pamphylia, yet will reenlist himself in Antioch, and will live to be a comforter of apostles, yea, an evangelist of the churches: a Saul, once (he says it of himself) a blasphemer and a persecutor, yet made 'willing in the day of Christ's power,' and chosen out of all men to 'cause the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world.' Yes, there shall be in this as in all things 'first last and last first:' be not disdainful, but charitable—be not highminded, but fear.

St Matthew records at this point a whole parable devoted to this theme. The labourer early called, early obedient, must not despise, must not envy, the later call or the later obedience of another. God gives not account to us of His dealing with His own. There is a spirit of contempt and cavilling which may even forfeit

the crown. 'Last shall be first, and first last.' Not the start but the arrival is the thing in question. 'He that endures to the end shall be saved.'

We have then before us, as the principal subject, a magnificent view of the compensations of discipleship.

Some have talked slightingly of the sacrifices made by Peter and his companions. They are supposed to have had little to give up. A crazy boat or two, a few tattered nets—this was their all. The word 'fisherman' carries to our ears, in spite of the hired servants and the house in Capernaum, an almost inevitable impression of low rank and poor circumstances. On the other hand, it does not appear that at the time of this occurrence their abandonment of home or employment was either final or absolute. After the resurrection the disciples are found in Galilee, resuming, at least occasionally, their old occupations.

Nevertheless they rightly regarded the call to follow Jesus as a call to give up everything for it. From that moment they belonged to Another. Whithersoever He led, they must follow. Never again would they be their own for a single hour. It was a true instinct which made Peter combine in consecutive clauses and as equivalent phrases the 'left all' and the 'followed Thee.' An entire detachment from all that had made and been the old life was the very condition and meaning of the new. To leave house and lands, brethren and sisters, father and mother, wife and children, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, was the solemn act of self-dedication, the very sign and sacrament of discipleship, by which a new convert cut himself off from the Judaism or from the heathenism (as the case might be) in which he had

heretofore lived and moved and had his being. It was just what a man of the highest caste in India has to do at this day if he can make up his mind (and no wonder if in such cases it is a rare thing) to adopt Christianity. Every commonest act of his life has been connected with the worship of an idol deity: and to tell him that you will excuse him from giving up caste, that you will allow him to be a Brahmin and yet a Christian, is something much beyond the permission to bow himself now and then in the house of Rimmon: it is a licence to combine in perpetuity the service of Christ and the service of Belial, to be an habitual partaker at once of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils. The man must leave all, if he is to follow Christ.

No doubt, when the Christian church began to plant itself everywhere, with its congregations and communities regularly organized, so far from disturbing social order or breaking up family connexions, it tended rather to confirm and consolidate each. Every word of the epistles implies the recognition of all existing relationships, and the continuance of every believer in the condition and circumstances in which he was called. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves, all were to remain as Christ found them, only bringing into each duty and each relation a consecrating motive and a sanctifying principle. The gospel came to transfigure, not to revolutionize; to remodel spiritually, not ostensibly, the various functions and institutions of society. Henceforth the literal leaving all was to be the higher effort, the more ambitious enterprise, of certain exceptional ministries. The man who amidst the refinements of a well-appointed home or the proprieties of a

nicely ordered parish hears within him the voice of Jesus Christ, bidding him to carry the gospel across sea and land into some region where all is still confusion and darkness, enters literally into the experience of apostles of old, who could say humbly and thankfully to the Saviour who chose and sent, 'Lo, we have left all and have followed Thee.' Doubtless too there are many who ought to hear this voice and will not. Doubtless, both in the choice of professions, and in the subsequent choice of places and circumstances of service, there is still in us all a niceness and a fastidiousness, a self-sparing and a self-pleasing, which is effeminate, cowardly, and therefore anti-Christian. We use far too lightly the word 'impossible.' We pick and we choose far too daintily amongst alternatives presented. We refuse to count amongst the alternatives all that is rough and hard, and therefore perhaps the more Christ-like, in the answers to that enquiry which yet we all profess to open, or we could not write ourselves Christians, 'What shall I do, Lord? What wilt Thou have me to do?'

There are some present in this congregation whose lives are not yet shaped as to the particular calling. They cannot too soon or too seriously remember that, in this age and in this country at least, literally 'the field is the world.' The possibilities of service are unbounded. Let no silly sneers, let no infidel taunts, prevail to suggest to you that the gospel of Jesus Christ has lost its old strength and life for evangelizing, that the mission-field is effete and sterile, or that the living Saviour has in any respect modified what have been aptly called His church's marching orders, 'Go ye into

all the world—make all the nations disciples'—and then, and in so doing, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'

But here, speaking from this pulpit, and after a week so memorable in reference to this more apostolical work, this indeed divine life, no tone of address seems so suitable as that of intense thankfulness to the Author and Giver of every perfect gift for the grace which He has bestowed and for the prospect which He has opened. The lives which have given and are giving themselves to the Cambridge Delhi Mission are described, by those who know, as the very salt and light of our society. And yet we grudge them not to India. For we know that, in this as in all sacrifices made for Christ's sake and the gospel's, to keep is to lose, and to give is to have. From every such self-dedication another springs, and another, and another: life generates life, in spiritual things, as surely as death breeds death: such men bear away with them from amongst us influences which we can ill spare, but (with Elisha of old) we 'see' them as they are taken, and lo, 'a double portion of their spirit' rests upon those who stay.

For the rest of us, for whom it is too late to rearrange the life, or to whom it is not given to dream of magnificent sacrifices, it must suffice—and this shall not lack its blessing—to stretch after them the hands of sympathetic interest and of bountiful aid; to keep alive amongst ourselves the flame of that zeal for gospel progress which has borne them hence in person; to see that there be no lack of offerings—head, heart, and hand—to cherish and to subsidize; so that they may never doubt, in their far-off mission, the memory or the love of that University whose sons and whose

ambassadors they are, and that there may be a continuous succession (God grant it) of devout and devoted men to strengthen their hands living, and, as the need shall arise, to be baptized for the dead.

In comparison with such enterprises of faith and devotion, it may seem a small thing to speak of the less definite but not less real self-dedications which are certainly within our reach; the leaving all, in heart and will, for Christ's sake and the gospel's; the marking every treasure and every possession, intellectual or material, with the true 'Corban,' which is, 'Holiness to the Lord;' the so subordinating every taste and every affection as that we shall remember and not forget Him in each; the bringing every thought and every attachment into captivity (as St Paul writes) to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Whoso does this does all: he too is a servant and an apostle: he too hath in spirit left house and lands for Jesus: he too shall receive an hundredfold in this life and in the life to come.

This is the discipleship. Now for its compensations. Our Lord divides them. There is a compensation in the present—'now in this time.' The nature of it is remarkable. 'He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands.' The very language shows the promise figurative. We have read it perhaps as quite vague—'shall receive something instead, something which shall reconcile him to the loss, of all these.' An inward peace, suppose—a sense of God reconciled—an appreciation of the littleness of things temporal—a growing deepening apprehension of things invisible and eternal.

Is there not something besides—something more precise, more peculiar—in this promise?

Brothers, sisters, mothers, children—an hundredfold, each and all of these, now, in this time—no mere equivalent, in the dim shadowy future, for the sacrifice of them here? Surely the speech is concerning that wonderful feature of the blessed gospel—the brotherly, sisterly, filial, parental love (as the case may be) which is between Christians as Christians; that love which Christ Himself inaugurated in the words which He uttered in figure concerning Himself, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.' It is so with His disciples. He who once makes up his mind to be Christ's entirely and in everything must expect, must be prepared, to leave all for Him. All that was of nature, all that is of choice—father and mother, brother and sister, friend closer than a brother, sweet presence of wife or child—all these, in will at least, perhaps in act, he will have to surrender. They may fall off from him, in feeling, or by death. He may have to sever the tie, because Christ bids him go, or because they will not follow him for Christ. But he shall have compensation. There is a family—no man can number it—in earth and heaven, of which he becomes a member when he becomes a Christian. God is its Father, Christ is its Head; holy angels are its elder brothers; saints, martyrs, and apostles, all good men dead and living, are its inmates and its kinsfolk; earth is its compass, heaven is its home: and whosoever believes in Christ, whosoever has the Holy Spirit in him, enters at once upon the affections

and the sympathies of all these: every Christian whom he meets and whom he works with is his brother or his sister: every Christian matron who cheers him by her womanly kindness is his mother, and every Christian boy whom he influences by his manly love is straightway his child: extend, expand this kinsmanship through all space and all time, and you will see why Jesus Christ should say that the man who gives up or is willing to give up the natural wins a hundredfold in the spiritual—is a richer man, even in relationships, than he was or could be without Christ—may well say, as he sets off earth against heaven, I am the gainer beyond words—those things which were my prizes and my treasures, 'I count them all but dross and loss for Christ.'

Delightful must it have been, to the great heart of St Paul, when his name was cast out as evil by family and country, to find wheresoever he carried the Name a new brotherhood and sisterhood created for him. 'Phœbe our sister...Andronicus and Junias my kinsmen...Gaius mine host, and Quartus my brother...Rufus chosen in the Lord, and her who is his mother and mine'—thus he runs through, in a letter to one church not yet visited, the list of his new, his Christian relations: we feel, as we read, the force of the 'hundredfold now in this time:' we begin to understand the text as something having indeed 'the promise of this life:' we pause perhaps, and scarcely (I think) with tearless eyes, at that one anonymous title, 'his mother and mine:' one faithful woman in the Roman congregation—her name surely is in the book of life—had the honour above all honour to be a 'mother' to that toiling, yearning, most loving, most loveable man.

This is that 'love of the brethren' of which St John writes that without it life itself is death. We talk much of charity; we sing its praises as the synonym of good nature, of toleration, of vagueness, too often of indifference: too often we do not pass to it, as alone we can safely pass, through this other—through the love of the brethren. 'Add,' St Peter says, 'to brotherly kindness charity.' 'Supply' the one, he says in his own Greek, 'through' the other. Let the love of Christian for Christian expand and spread itself till it embraces Greek and barbarian, till it loves for the sake of Christ even those unloving ones for whom nevertheless Christ died.

But before even this true charity stands the family love of the church. Let us make more of this. There are lonely people on this great earth—how could this be if they knew of the text, if they read, if they pleaded it? Health, position, circumstance, accident, may debar them from its full fruition. They live perhaps alone, and must live, so far as the speech and the sight go, not only of the natural but of the spiritual brotherhood. Still, when they think of it; when they know that only the speech or the sight is wanting; when they remember the great universe, the visible and the invisible, instinct and teeming with this sympathy, which is, being interpreted, God's love reflected and echoed everywhere in the love of God—can they not take courage? Lost brother and sister, lost father and mother, replaced a hundredfold now in this time—only just out of sight—hereafter to be manifested, in all the beauty and in all the plenitude of the everlasting home—shall it not comfort? Every act of worship a meeting of this family; every

prayer, every aspiration, an exercise of this sympathy, a prognostication of this union—well might St John write, 'We know that we have passed into life, because we love the brethren,' and then conversely, lest any should torture himself as to his possession of this evidential love, 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God.' Either of the two loves—so intertwined, so inseparable, are they—shall attest, shall prove them both.

The festival on which we are assembled is the festival of brotherly love. Two apostles, brothers perhaps first by birth, brothers (it may have been) of the Lord Himself by birth, have separately left all for His sake and the gospel's; and they have found themselves again brothers, to Him and to each other, not after the flesh but after the spirit. The church has wedded the names in one commemoration, as the perpetual symbol of the consecrated 'two and two.' 'He sent his disciples,' He sends them still, 'two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come.' It is thus that Cambridge has constituted her Delhi Mission. I quote the words: 'Many advantages may be expected from sending out an organized band of men prepared to live and labour together in one foreign field—concentration of effort and subdivision of labour, continuity of teaching, economy of means, leisure for literary work (in reaching through the press the educated classes of India), and frequent opportunities of united devotion.'

These are the tones to brace and cheer
  The lonely watcher of the fold,
When nights are dark, and foemen near,
  When visions fade and hearts grow cold.

Brethren, let us resolve—you more especially whose life is still young—you who can do so much to give the tone to the religion, to the theology, of a generation which shall take our place on God's earth—never to narrow this love. Let us never refuse a share of it to any one who will have it. Let us rejoice in the thought that the kingdom is wider than our knowledge, grander and more generous than our stipulations. 'Firstfruits of His creatures,' this is our designation. Let us hope, and let us pray, that, 'if the firstfruits are holy,' so shall be 'the lump.' Lord, hasten it in Thy time.

In this vast field of thought much must be left unnoticed. Of two things passed over I am conscious.

'With persecutions.' Note that characteristic candour of the gospel, first exemplified by its Lord, which will entrap no man into His service; which will set full in view before each one of us the sorrows and the sacrifices, and then say, Count well the cost; but, if you do put your hand to the plough, look not back.

Also that overwhelming word in which all is summed up, 'And in the world to come eternal life.' This one thing is less for speech than for silence. 'No man hath ascended up into heaven,' that he should come back to say to his brethren, 'I saw the holy city,' and lo, it is this, and this.

We must turn to things less high above out of our sight, and remind you of a practical duty, which I have to-day, as in many past years, to press earnestly upon your attention.

The University dwells in a town, and the church of the town is a suppliant to-day to the church of the University. Christians with Christians plead not ever

in vain; and assuredly the town, if in some sense injuriously affected in past time by the near neighbourhood of much carelessness and some licentiousness, is now deeply the debtor of the University, not more for substantial prosperity than for noble magnificent Christian example.

Of all the signs of spiritual vitality in our beloved University I count none so conclusive as its efforts, of the last half century and conspicuously of the last ten years, in behalf of the spiritual life of the town. A few days ago you were celebrating the jubilee of the University Sunday school for the poor children of Cambridge. A touching festival of song and thanksgiving commemorated on that occasion the advent and the sacrifice of 'God with us;' and no heart that could feel was insensible that day to the realization of the Emmanuel presence in the work of those young men—young when they wrought in it, now of hoar hairs many of them, and many fallen on sleep—who gave of their precious hours, of their intervals of anxious intellectual labour, in the fifty years that are passed, to the enterprise of evangelizing Cambridge through its little ones and through its homes.

In comparison with such proofs of a personal devotion where shall we place the mere struggling to listen to a popular voice, the mere crowding of churches where either ritual, song, or preaching exercises a powerful attraction upon sympathetic assemblies?

To-day you are reminded of a movement of our own generation to maintain additional ministers for the poor parishes of Barnwell and Chesterton; in other words, to carry the preaching of the gospel into the streets and

lanes of these suburbs by the instrumentality of faithful men acting in entire conformity with the rules of apostolical order. It is an evidence, second not even to that which has been named, of the awakening zeal and love of the University towards its less privileged neighbours. I would bid you to study the records of the movement, to thank God for it, and then to help it as you can with your sympathy, your alms, your prayers.

I am bound to tell you that very much of its efficiency for the year that is now running its course will depend upon the offerings of your bounty to-day. Nothing would be easier than for this congregation to place it by a single effort beyond risk and beyond anxiety. More than once I have ventured to ask you—and once at least you kindly listened to me—to take care that the collection at these doors should not fall short of a hundred pounds. Less than this will leave us still in suspense, still pondering the sad question which of our grants to those four destitute parishes must be withdrawn, diminished, or left in arrear. And think with yourselves, dear brethren, how small a sacrifice it would cost you, of anything that you really value as intelligent Christian men, to make such an offering this afternoon as would represent but two shillings apiece from the great congregation which I look upon from this pulpit.

It is very interesting, and to Christian hearts very encouraging, to notice how the supply of one spiritual want leads on to the demand for another; how, when you have given a pastor, the people cry out for a church, and by that second cry tell you that their souls

thank and bless you for having heard or for having anticipated the first.

We have been reading last week the account of the reopening of a great Cathedral, in which, at an interval of five centuries, a new nave has been added to the old choir, so that the fabric stands out at last in all the completeness and grandeur of its original design. On a small scale indeed, but with a more urgent necessity, we would ask you for a like work of perfecting in a church of this town. The church of St Barnabas is still a fragment, a naveless chancel: the people throng that little area: they want space for worshippers that would be—will you help to give it them? Will you come forward, those 'in whom such a heart is,' and collect for this work, in your colleges, and among your friends?

O the blessedness of work done for Jesus Christ! Done in sincerity, done in simplicity, done in love, it shall not lack its reward. 'An hundredfold now in this time—in the world to come' who shall measure it?

When Jesus Christ uttered the glorious promise on which we have dwelt, He thought it necessary to couple it with one caution. I would humbly follow that divine example, and say one closing word upon the verse following the text—

'But many that are first shall be last, and the last first.'

It is a caution, and it is an encouragement. Both were needed then: Peter himself needed both; the one on the instant, when he was boasting; the other, a few weeks after, when he was bitterly weeping: can either this or that be needless here to-day?

'Many shall be—first last.' Where is boasting?

How sudden, how insidious, is the entrance of the foe. The very consciousness of standing is of the nature of a fall. The very thought, 'God, I thank Thee,' may be the Pharisee worship—that prayerless thanksgiving which goes not home justified.

There are those who once ran well: who or what hath hindered them? what special weakness, indolence, temptation? God knoweth—yes, they know. To-day they are laggards, sluggards, rebels, renegades. Shall they rise again? Shall that stupid sleep, that deadly lust, that fatal infidelity, ever be shaken off, cast out, recovered from? Shall they one day be pleading—O let it be this night—pleading in their own behalf the promise, 'Many shall be—last first?'

Whose memory can adduce no instance of this? That young boy, once so light-hearted and joyous—you saw him play, you heard him jest, in the days of his ignorance: *you* were then the serious one; you augured ill perhaps for his hereafter: in early youth you lost sight of him—where is he now? A Christian soldier, a Christian missionary, a Christian martyr; rejoicing in Christ here, or sleeping in Christ for long years in some rough Crimean or Indian or African grave.

But we all want the prophecy—want it for the safe standing, want it for the possible rising—'Many that are last shall be first.'

What morning breaks upon me not among the hindmost? When is the morning prayer light-hearted, when is the evening prayer jubilant, for any one of us? O, if the hope were only for the hopeful, if the race were only to the swift, if the battle only to the strong, who, who

could persevere? It is the thought of Him who stooped from His heaven of holiness and of glory to fetch the distant nigh and to say 'Last first'—it is this which keeps me so much as struggling. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief'—this is my best. He casts not out this: He seems to bid even this look upward.

Then let us love Him for His great love. He came not to call the righteous: then perhaps He came to call *even me.*

XXII.

THREE TYPES OF CHARACTER—ENTHUSIASM, RELUCTANCE, COMPROMISE.

St Luke ix. 62.

No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

THIS verse, like the third of the three narratives which it closes, is found only in St Luke. It gives great completeness to that exhibition of human character in its dealing with Christ and the gospel which is the subject of the paragraph. 'That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed' is stated by the old man, holding in his arms the infant Saviour, as the purpose, no less than the result, of that 'gainsaying' which, he prophesied, should everywhere attend Him. We have here the thoughts of three hearts revealed: and seeing that human nature is the same in all times, and that the treatment of Jesus Christ is in reality the test of all lives, and that there are here before me a number of young lives yet to be shaped and moulded as to their course and as to their destination, I trust that a few plain words may not be unseasonable this afternoon upon the three characters delineated in this passage of the book of God for perpetual conviction, correction, and education in righteousness.

1. In the first instance we have an example of that enthusiasm which Jesus Christ awakened, by His teaching, character, and presence, in hearts capable of appreciating the true, the great, the beautiful, the divine. If St Luke gives the right place to this incident, we might imagine that it was our Lord's language about the Samaritan village—His rebuke to the two brothers who would call fire from heaven to avenge its inhospitable conduct—His saying, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them'—which elicited this eager and chivalrous proposal, 'Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'

But it needed not one particular manifestation of the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ to account for that outburst of devotion. It must have been the feeling of a thousand hearts, as men tracked His footsteps along the lanes and hill-sides of Galilee, and listened day by day to the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. We know what it is, in poor human experience, to feel the whole soul stirred within us by the sight of a life wholly given to the service of God in charity, or by the hearing of words of loving entreaty from lips evidently giving forth that which was a life before it was a doctrine. We know how one man devoting himself to the cause of Christ, in India, in Africa, in New Zealand, has had power to draw after him by the magnet of sympathy tens and hundreds of other men, whose souls were of that higher order, in point of love and in point of purity, which can respond to a call not of this world, and find it none the less persuasive if it demands of them the sacrifice of their all. Judge ye, from this experience,

what must have been, to hearts capable of it, the influence of Jesus Christ present in person to point the way, and able without presumption to propose Himself to His hearers as at once the guide and the companion, the light of the living and the life of the dead.

There are those—can we doubt it?—amongst the occupants of these galleries, who have many times in these last ten or fifteen years felt just the impulse of this young scribe. There have been days of cloudless beauty, in the world of nature and in the world of feeling, when they have longed for a satisfying love and an open heaven. There have been days of strong conviction, of powerful impression, of resolute effort, when they have aspired to a noble life, and none the less if it should have in it the abandonment of luxury and the treading underfoot of fame. There have been days of deep sorrow, of felt loneliness, it may be of secret self-shame, when they could have given their all, on the instant, for one word with the holy and merciful Saviour, who is said to have said on earth, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden'—and, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.'

And they know and feel this day, in their heart and in their soul, that such moments were not their worst but their best; not moments to be ashamed of, but moments in which God was moving in them to quicken the very life which would make them God-like. O compare with such moments the intervening months and years of stupid droning, silly trifling, or cowardly sinning. Pray that such moments may come again to you. Pray that the cry may rise again to your lips, as you plan the long life, as you forecast the infinite

future, 'Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'

And yet in this context that prayer is not welcomed. We are reminded again and again, in reading the gospels, first of the fragmentary, and secondly of the parabolical character of the evangelic history. Men come and go, appear and disappear, speak and are silent, without one word to tell us the whence and the whither, the significance of the speech or the significance of the silence. It is so in all Scripture. We are not intended to settle the question of questions for dead men any more than for the living. Each actor on the stage of the Bible has his part, and he plays it. He speaks for admonition, in some way and in some sense; but he tarries not to be interrogated concerning his history as a whole, or concerning his destiny in the judgment.

It is so with this scribe. Whether he spoke unadvisedly and was rebuffed by Christ's answer—or whether he laid to heart the warning and yet stood to his offer—or whether he departed for the time, but went to return—this we know not. There is parable in miracle—there is parable too in history: as parable we best read it, because then its lessons are for all time, and the lifeless page becomes a voice vocal to the living.

Thou sayest—and they are good words—'Lord, I will follow Thee.' But hast thou thought of this—the unrest of the Christian 'following?' 'Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests; only the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.'

We must not add or diminish where Jesus Christ has

spoken. This is His own description of the homelessness of His life of ministry. Once He had a home. We picture Him to ourselves, during all those long years of preparation for His work, the central object in a home of humble industry but of sleepless love. This home He had left, for charity and for ministry, for man and God. Now He had no home. Such attention as was shown, by Pharisee from one motive, by the sisters of Bethany from another motive, He accepted when it offered itself: but many days there was none such, and that absence also of service He accepted in its season. He who would follow Him must share with Him the service, and the lack of service—hast thou counted the cost?

Brethren, we read the parable of the homelessness of Jesus Christ as preparing us, His disciples now, for a life, I will not say of restlessness, but I will say, of unrest. It is the trial of trials to His people. Want of home is nothing to it. O, it is the feeling of being wanderers, not in the letter but in the spirit, which makes the Christian life hard. For some indeed it fulfils itself quite literally. There are those still—blessed be God for it—who will go forth 'taking nothing'—purse, scrip, and staff forgotten—that they may just follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ. There is a Bishop now in Australia—I saw him consecrated more than thirty years ago in Westminster Abbey—he has never seen England since that year: childless, wifeless, homeless, he has just been the missionary bishop, living for Christ and His people: now he is struck down by paralysis—he will die there. These are the men who in act as well as in will, in the letter as well as in the

spirit, follow Christ whithersoever He goeth. 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head'—wilt thou follow Him everywhere? Think of it twice ere thou speakest the 'whithersoever.' Think of it twice—yes, but think of it. It is a blessed life—blessed, and rich in blessing.

We shall not escape the unrest by escaping the homelessness. All who speak the word, 'Lord, I will follow,' must lay their account for this trial. You may think you have found your rest: perhaps in some English parsonage, beautiful and homelike; within reach of dear friends, and surrounded by an attached people. Perhaps in a well digested system of traditional theology; text balanced by text, authorities well weighed, and a long line of worthies attesting the correctness of the Shibboleth and the completeness of the doctrine. Perhaps in the full assurance either of a baptismal regeneration needing only to be lived up to, or else of a conscious conversion to which you can assign both place and hour, both source and course. Thus you may be saying, The outward homelessness may come to me, if God will; but the inward rest is sure: 'I shall never be moved; Thou, Lord, of Thy goodness hast made my hill so strong.'

Enjoy, while you may, Christian scribe, the rest and the home, outward or inward. Yet mark Christ's words, 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' Read His words spiritually, and be prepared—I say but this—be prepared to find thy moorings shifted and thy cables severed; to find, if thou wilt open thine ears, many voices in them, compelling thee to enquire; to find, if thou wilt open thine heart, many voices in it, saying, 'This is not thy rest:' not here, not here is

absolute quietness; not here, not here is the perfect peace. *The* trial of the Christian is the homelessness of Jesus. 'Always bearing about in the body' the unrest of the Master, that the rest also of the Master may be manifested in the storm-tossed soul.

Enthusiasm is one of the 'thoughts of hearts' revealed by contact with Jesus. He meets it with warning. None shall come after Him by mistake or in misunderstanding. 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,' and they that would follow Him must expect to fare likewise. The true 'enthusiast,' which is to say, the man who has the fire of God in him, will come, for all that: nay, the very repulsion has attraction in it; 'the servant is not greater than his Lord,' and he would not rest while his Lord wanders.

2. The next case is the direct opposite. St Luke alone gives it its full significance by assigning the initiative here to Christ. 'He said unto another, Follow me.' And the man makes excuse.

Even upon earth there was sovereignty in the voice of Jesus Christ. 'When thou comest in Thy kingdom,' were words addressed to Him on the cross. 'Thou sayest that I am a king,' was His own answer to His judge.

Thus was it in that call by which He gathered to Him His twelve apostles. One day He passed by the counting-house of a rich official; spoke the word, 'Follow me,' to a man as little expecting it, as little prepared for it, as any one of you, rising from his bed this morning, was prepared for a summons to America or to China: and there was that in the tone which carried authority as well as persuasion, and the person addressed instantly abandoned his gainful calling, and after one solemn

feast of farewell and welcome became one of His disciples, one of the apostles, at last one of the evangelists, of the Man who had not where to lay His head. Sovereignty was in the summons, and the heart heard it.

Some such preferment was offered in the case before us. The gracious, the awful 'Follow me' was spoken, and the man accosted by it was bidden to enter that innermost circle which was first to take the impress, and then to represent the likeness, of God manifested in the flesh.

The call which was not for the enthusiast was for him. Wonderful discrimination! This man wants what the other required not, a startling demand for an instantaneous decision. This man was halting between two opinions. Sovereignty itself speaks here to an ambiguous subject. The grandest of careers is opened before this life. But there is an impediment.

We take the reply literally, and conceive of this person as having left in his home the lifeless body of a father, to which it is a primary duty to pay the rites of burial. It may have been to soothe the sorrow of that recent parting that he had mingled with the crowd surrounding the Saviour. The voice of Jesus has ever had music in it for the mourner: the brief pause between the death and the funeral could not better be filled than by a visit to the Man of sorrows, who made Himself felt also, before He verbally claimed the title, as the resurrection and the life.

How natural then—we must say it—that the 'Follow me' should elicit the answer, itself submissive and reverent, 'Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.' Nature prompts, duty requires, religion orders,

that in death as in life a son should honour his father: how can Christ, Himself the best of sons, Himself even from the cross caring for His mother, hesitate to say, 'Go and do it,' even if He should add in the same breath, 'Then return and follow?' Which of us has not felt the severity of that hard saying, 'Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God?' Has the tenderness of Jesus Christ for once left Him? Has He who wept at the grave which He was instantly to open no word of sympathy for this orphan son, nothing but the harsh order to dash away his tears and go and preach? Even the ordained man, pledged once, twice, and thrice to the church's ministry, counts it no lack of service if he gives a Sunday of silence to the memory of a lost wife or child, feels that this silence may preach more eloquently to the living than a hundred sermons, is itself a tribute of reverence to the Master who both gives and takes away. Yet that Master speaks here in other tones, 'Let the dead bury their dead—go thou, and preach.'

We presume not to say what special reasons there may have been in this instance for a peremptoriness which could brook no delay. But of this we are sure, that Jesus Christ is here teaching us in parable, and that we can all, if we will, hear Him.

There is one thing, He says, yet more important than any competing or conflicting duty. That one thing is the reign of God in man's heart, and the establishment of that reign first of all in thine own. Be jealous of anything which comes to thee saying, 'Christ may call, but listen first to me.' This thing may take the shape of duty. It may parade before thee wishes, conveniences,

comforts of friends, when the voice is strong in thee for missionary service. It may expostulate with thee as concerning old age, infirm health, tender affection, in one who instrumentally gave thee being and has a right in thee to every place but one. It may say, Wait but the ten years, or the five years, which alone can separate thee from the death and from the burial, and then follow whithersoever He goeth.

And we know, brethren, how deep is the love of Christ for earth's affections, which He created, which He consecrated, which He felt. O, it is not because a particular ministry or a particular mission is painful to those near and dear to us, that therefore it is Christ's call. He would not have one real duty neglected, or one willing wound inflicted, or one wanton void created, on the plea that He has spoken and must be obeyed. Men deceive themselves sometimes in this direction, and misname wilfulness sacrifice and cruelty Christianity.

But this is not so common as another delinquency; which is, the ingenuity of discovering obstacles, the fertility of multiplying impediments, in the way of visible openings, clear calls, and conscious capacities. It is not necessary that a whole family of sons should all remain in sight of ever so dear a home. It is not reasonable that they who reconcile themselves to the gift of one child to military service or commercial enterprise, knowing that it may involve long, perhaps life-long separations—perils perhaps of premature death, in the accidents, by sea and land, of distant duty—should only count it impossible to spare another to Christ Himself; should only plead, 'Suffer him first to bury his father,' when the devotion asked is 'for

Christ's sake and the gospel's,' and the work to be done is the seeking in far-off islands of 'Christ's sheep that are scattered abroad.'

Then it is that the stern mandate, 'Let the dead bury their dead,' awakens into a righteous imperiousness—even if we hear it say, There is one thing more urgent than a funeral, there is one relationship closer still than the filial, there is one tie of duty more binding yet than any natural. Let the dead bury *themselves* rather than cause oblivion of that: at least leave the dead in soul to bury the dead in body: at least leave for ever to a world dead in sin that office which is so dear to it of the mutual burying, heart helping heart to forget the eternal, life encouraging life to deify the temporal.

Yes, Christ's sayings, as the psalmist says of God's judgments, 'are a great deep.' They have in them a thousand meanings, ten thousand applications: and then first do we at all sound the depths of this saying, when we read death itself spiritually, and understand it to warn us against that kind of burying which is the heaping high and higher upon each other the mould of corrupt affection and inordinate passion, of the worship of wealth and the idolatry of intellect, of the perpetual postponement of seriousness, and the most deceptive yet most persuasive insinuation, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement.'

This is the very occupation of earth and earth's children. Against this is the trumpet of the gospel vainly sounded in ears which accept the word that they may take out of it the meaning. Against this 'burying of their dead by the dead' no protest is one half so efficacious as that of a new life entering into

some separately convinced soul; a new self-dedication to Christ's absolute service, at home or abroad, of one who has heard with the inward ear His 'Follow me,' and has been made 'willing in the day of His power' to obey.

Then it shall matter little comparatively to the great cause, whether this land or that land shall employ the service; whether it be given to the first evangelization or the second—to the annunciation of Christ where He is not yet named, or to the task, of no inferior magnitude, of making Christ real where for generations He has been nominal. 'Follow me' is a voice of infinite compass: it will define itself in its season—it may be more than once over—to the singly listening soul.

3. Enthusiasm cautioned, reluctance stimulated—what third 'heart's thought' remains for Christ's discipline?

It is a character wonderfully composite which St Luke here presents to us. It partakes of both the former. Like the first, it volunteers to follow: like the second, it petitions for delay. 'And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.'

We have named the first character Enthusiasm, and we have named the second character Reluctance: we must call the third character Compromise.

This man offers to follow Jesus. Something, though in fainter and slighter degree, of the attraction which drew the young scribe has been felt also here. The holy doctrine of the Saviour has awakened an echo in the conscience: the moral beauty of the Saviour has found its appreciation in the heart.

'Lord, I will follow Thee. Despised and rejected, wanderer and exile, I will follow Thee. Thou hast words of eternal life; my soul is athirst for them: yes, I will follow Thee.' What lacks he yet?

We say nothing of the omission of the 'whithersoever Thou goest:' we take that as implied. It is not omission that we notice, but addition. There is a clause here which was not in the first. The volunteer stipulates, the enthusiast procrastinates. He will follow—'but' he must do one thing first.

Like the two brothers in the paragraph above, he might have invoked the precedent of Elijah, who, instead of rebuking, encouraged Elisha in this sort of preliminary farewell; even when he had cast upon him the prophetic mantle said, 'What have I done to thee?' and granted instantly the request of natural duty, 'Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.' Just such was the prayer, 'Lord, I will follow Thee—but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.'

But the prayer is not granted. Doubtless the Searcher of hearts saw something in this heart which made the adieu perilous. At all events, He was teaching for all time; and the parable for all time is this, 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'

There may be an impulse of good, which is short of a resolution: there may be a resolution of good, which is short of a principle: there may even be a principle of good, which breaks down in practice. 'The spirit may be willing, and yet the flesh weak.' We cannot trust ourselves with these farewells, at least till

one question has been answered, *Who* are 'they at home?'

Even natural affection, the purest and the most human, has had power to divert from Christ's service, in some difficult, some enterprising form, the heart that had just sworn the 'sacrament.' There are those who have put their hand to the plough, and then looked back. There are young men, pledged from childhood to the ministry, who have broken that pledge at the University. There are young clergymen, self-destined, self-devoted, to the highest ministry, the work of the foreign evangelist, who have found the spell of home, the spell of love, too strong for them, and in the very going to bid farewell have been seduced into a permanent looking back. There are men, young and old, who have consecrated themselves to the church of the world—have 'set to their seal,' as well as 'put their hand,' to the engagement of a life's sacrifice—and have found it impossible, with their measure of grace, to hold the purpose and to be faithful to it till death. The sands of earth, the fields of the church, are covered with the print of these backward footsteps: they have taken the romance out of missions; they have lowered the standard of the very word devotion.

Yet these men may have done nothing wrong. They may have been good men; not only 'saved as by fire' with 'the work burned,' but leaving something done towards the everlasting temple.

Compromise is scarcely the name for *these* withdrawals. We go back to our question, Who are they at the house, to whom the farewell must be spoken ere the man can follow Jesus Christ?

I know well enough that it is not only natural affection which bars the way of devotion. There is a procrastination strangely blending with enthusiasm, and it has all manner of motives and all manner of excuses.

It may be too much to suppose—it is too much certainly to take for granted—that all we are in any true sense so much as pledged and plighted to follow. The word has not yet been spoken between us and Christ, 'Lord, I will follow Thee.' A thousand doubts have sprung up, and they have not been grappled with, who and what Christ is—whether indeed He is, except it be as a temporary dweller in the past—a saintly name, a perfect life, a bright, for us a too bright, example. Therefore we can have no dealing with Him: we cannot treat with Him on the footing of the 'I' and 'Thou:' we cannot speak to the non-existent; we cannot follow, save in most distant, most shadowy imitation, One whose footsteps, now at least, go no whither.

And yet there is that in us all which would give worlds for just such a one. If He is not, there is a blank, there is a void, there is a darkness which may be felt. Thus much of evidence He has: without this witness He has not left Himself. We count it a proof above proofs, that, made as we are made, there is an idea in us, there is an instinct in us, there is a want in us, of Jesus Christ. 'Lord, to whom shall we go if Thou be not?' is an outcry of the creature, eloquent of the Creator: that pure, that sublime appetite for the God-Man—in other words, for an incarnation of the divine—is an argument, for such as

believe in love, that the Father has revealed Himself in the Son.

Thousands believe this—could therefore deal with Jesus Christ as the risen, the living One—and yet interpose something before the doing so. It is to these the text speaks.

There is something in your home which cannot stay there with Jesus; something to which you must say farewell ere you follow Him. What is it?

There is something each day (who has not found it so?) between us and duty; most of all, between us and spiritual duty—the duty of refreshing and strengthening the spirit by communion with the Father, of seeking Him whom to know is eternal life. Mere indolence of heart, mere laziness of body—a book, a letter, a newspaper, a moment's converse with a friend—something there is which prompts the saying, 'I will follow Thee, but—just this first:' and of this too, this small, this insignificant postponement, Christ says, It is unfit, it is unsuitable, for a disciple of the kingdom.

But at certain periods of life (who has not found it so?) there is something more than this between us and duty. 'Fearfully and wonderfully made,' is the Psalmist's estimate of the mechanism of this body: yet more true is it of the life. When is anything quite done with, that has once been? One incident of the life's past—one weakness, one folly, one sin—how importunate, how imperishable, how immortal, is it. Ghosts of old habit, when shall I have laid you? Demons of old sinning, when shall I have exorcised you? These are the things—I had almost said, these are the persons—'at home at my house,' to which I would

fain say farewell ere I finally devote myself. And in that saying farewell there is oftentimes a looking backward. Compromise may lurk in the stipulation, and he that would follow Jesus can only make sure of it by following on the instant.

Finally, there is a moment in each life, when it is called to a decision of what kind and of what spirit it will be. It is this which gives its peculiar solemnity to a scene and to an occasion like the present. For it is here, it is now, that lives are determining themselves, for this world and for that which is to come. We ourselves can recall sermons preached forty years since from the pulpit of a great University, of which the echo is in us to this day and to this hour. It is not given to all men to speak words of everlasting impression: but the cause of the impression is the reality of the crisis; and the crisis is ever new, so long as the young life shall be repeating itself year by year in the old places—so long as God shall be sending forth His Spirit to renew, and bidding each man of each generation go forth to his work and to his labour till the evening. May it please Him, by any instrumentality, to put forth His omnipotent grace in the determination of multitudes of these lives for a service the noblest of all and the most delightful. May a new enthusiasm, all of grace, kill in us the lethargy of the self-pleasing, and the reluctance of the half-heart. May we count the cost, and yet follow—may we put our hand to the plough, and never look back. Let the dead past bury its dead, and let the living responsible present sow for the everlasting future an immortality of joy and glory.

XXIII.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE FOR RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY.

Psalm cxxxi. 2, 3.

I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low.

THE words are beautiful and suggestive. They speak for themselves, as to their suitableness to this great festival, the crowning day of the church's year—and not less to the life of souls training here for the service of a generation and for the capability of an immortal being.

It will not be necessary to enter to-day into the vexed question of the title, 'A song of degrees,' prefixed to each one of the fifteen psalms which follow immediately upon the hundred and nineteenth. Whether it is a musical term, or a poetical term, or a local term; whether it points to some peculiarity in the chant to which the psalm was to be set—or to some peculiarity in the composition, rising from point to point upon some predominant word, the keynote of the thought—or to some particular spot, whether stair or gallery, in the temple courts where it was to be sung; is a matter of no moment to us to-day, when, if the choice be free to us, we would rather look upon this as in a different sense

'a song of ascents;' one of the 'hymns of the going up'—whether of the delivered exile returning to Jerusalem from Babylon, or of the Galilæan pilgrim seeking the holy city for one of the periodical feasts, and cheering the morning start or the noontide pause or the evening resting with one of those songs of Zion which shall answer for him the appropriate question, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up in His holy place?'

And then the psalm will become one of the shadows cast before of the divine teaching of Jesus. 'Two men went up into the temple to pray,' and the one that 'went down to his house justified' was the man of a humble spirit; the man who 'stood afar off,' with downcast eyes, and 'smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' 'My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: I have not walked in great things, things too wonderful for me: but I refrain my soul, and keep it low.'

The expressions are striking and exquisite. 'I have calmed and hushed my soul.' I have 'calmed'—properly, I have 'levelled'—my soul: I have made it smooth and even, like the field that has been furrowed by the plough and is now laid level by the harrow, or like the sea that has been tossed by storm and tempest and is now soothed and stilled again into calm. And then, once more, 'I have hushed my soul'—'made it silent,' is the exact thought, from its clamouring and its murmuring—'like the weaned child upon the breast of his mother;' taught his first lesson of denial and disappointment, and now beginning to acquiesce in the

discipline, if he may but 'cling still, in fond helplessness, to the bosom of his one friend.' Even thus—such is the strong figure of the original—even thus my soul—the living moving heart of feeling and affection, represented for the moment as distinct (like intellect or memory or conscience) from the 'I myself I' of the man—my soul rests, as it were, upon my bosom from all its wanderings and all its soarings, and learns at last to submit itself to that quieter, safer, holier employment, which is the love of that which God has commanded, and the desire of that which God has promised. 'I have calmed and hushed my soul: as the weaned child lies my soul upon me. Wait, O Israel, for the Lord, from henceforth even for ever.'

'I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me.'

The text carries us into the region of thought. It recognizes the responsibility of thinking. It presupposes the possibility of choosing and refusing in the entertainment of subjects. It implies that there are wholesome topics of thought, and unwholesome; and that a man is just as much bound to discriminate in the things he thinks of as in the employment of his hours, the formation of his habits, or the selection of his friends.

In this general statement all probably will agree. Doubtless there are here and there persons of exceptionally feeble will, who avow that they have no control over their thoughts; that they cannot avoid those rovings and saunterings of the mind, which lead to all manner of loose and corrupt imaginations, not to be justified yet not to be prevented. The stern moralist

and the gentle Christian agree in regarding such helplessness as either a crime or a madness; the result either of frightful neglect, or else of a moral malformation as mysterious as it is miserable. At all events, no safe place can be found in human society for one who professes himself impotent over the mind which moulds and makes the life.

Most men know perfectly well that they can control thought; that they can 'command the porter to watch' the comings in as well as the goings out, the entrances of thought as well as the exits of action.

But the remarkable thing in the text is the enlargement of the responsibility of the self-control, from the nature and quality, to what we may call the scale and size, of the thoughts.

We can well believe that the holy and devout psalmist did not suffer his heart to entertain licentious and lascivious thoughts; that he did not compose these sweet songs, or wend his way towards Zion, with the love of sin allowed in him, or with the power of sin reigning.

He speaks not of low but of high thoughts, not of grovelling but of soaring imaginations, as the disallowed and discountenanced inmates.

And there can be no doubt that there is a danger in this direction. There are not only evil desires, sinful lustings, to make frightful havoc of the life and of the soul: there are also speculations and rovings of thought, which give no other warning of their nature than this, that they belong to districts and regions beyond and above us; that they are fatal to the quietness and the silence of the spirit; that they cannot be entertained

without reawakening those restless and unsatisfied yearnings which were just beginning to still themselves on the bosom of the infinite love.

Of this sort, sometimes, are the ambitions of this life. Ambition has a use as well as an abuse. St Paul himself, who had counted all things loss for Christ, yet thrice in his epistles speaks of ambition as his life. We use ambition in our education. We count anything better than that stagnation of the being, which begins in idleness and ends in sensuality. We waken up the drowsy energies by proposing to them prizes of effort. We bid them even 'strive for masteries.' Competition itself, though it be the near kinsman of that 'emulation' which St Paul puts among works of the flesh, is yet enlisted among the soldiers of Jesus Christ, if so be it may sublime itself at last into an effort which desires no man's crown.

Nevertheless we all feel that there is an ambition 'which o'erleaps itself,' not more in the arrogance of its successes than in the extravagance of its expectations. There are men who would have been not only happier but greater if they had been less ambitious. There are men whose humbler efforts would at least have been respected, but whose more adventurous soarings have ended only in ridicule.

Especially is this true in the province of the intellect. We have known little men living with great men till nothing could content them but being great themselves. They have breathed an intellectual atmosphere till they have imagined an inspiration. There was no man to say to them, or they heeded not the warning, Learn of the wise—but 'be not many masters.' They began by

reproducing, they ended in imitating. The very words of the wise came not 'mended' but damaged 'from that tongue.' They stood on tiptoe, but they were dwarfs still. The same men, contented with reality—which in their case was mediocrity—might have done a useful if not an illustrious work in the generation which they were set not to illuminate but to serve. As men of industry, men of information, men of sense, they might have been eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. They might have been teachers in schools of which they could not be founders—handers on of that torch of truth which it was not given them to kindle. After all, the debt of the passing generation must be more to toil than to genius: this was their measure, this ought to have been their goal. They ought to have said—and they would have been gainers by saying it—'I will not exercise myself in great matters: they are too high for me. I will calm and hush my soul.'

That which is true in the ambitions of this life, whether professional or intellectual, is not less true in religion. It might seem that the psalmist wrote of this: it is for the sake of this certainly that we make his words our text to-day.

They are exemplified within the church and without. They are exemplified in the treatment of revelation—by believers, by doubters, by foes. The doctrine of the Trinity has been turned oftentimes from a mystery in the divine sense into a mystery in the human. The soul should have calmed and hushed itself in that presence, as before the revelation of a Father, a Saviour, and a Comforter, not three Gods but one God; each Person necessary to the repose and to the activity,

to the comfort and to the life, of every one of us, as we struggle along the path of difficulty into the clear light and into the perfect peace of a world in which God shall be all in all. Instead of this, speculation has been busy, and controversy has been busy, and logic has been busy, and rhetoric has been busy; and the whole matter has been referred and relegated from the tribunal of the soul to the tribunal of the intellect: theologians have exercised themselves in matters too wonderful for them: prayer has been intermitted for wrangling, and every nutritious particle has been industriously exterminated out of the bread of life.

There has been something wrong, we all say, in a process of which the result is thus disastrous. And we cannot think that the fault lay in the thoroughness or in the manifoldness of the investigation. It was not meant, we are quite sure, that any part of the man should be idle in the dealing with revelation. Reason cannot be hostile, save by scandalous mismanagement, to that which the God of reason has spoken. Indeed, we demur altogether to the introduction into this subject of those metaphysical partitions of the unit humanity, which alone make it possible to set truth and the truth at variance, by speaking of understanding and conscience, of judgment and will, almost as of separate personalities, and drawing sharp lines between their several jurisdictions in the decision and action of the man. The man is one and but one: he moves altogether if he moves at all: and the fault lies, not in using this part of himself when he ought to have used that, but rather in the spirit in which he used either; in the forgetfulness perhaps of the necessary limitations of knowing, but still

more in the posture and attitude in which he set himself to know. 'My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. I have calmed and hushed my soul.'

It may be that theologians have something to answer for in the sadder example to which we pass onward.

The life must have been secluded from common experiences, the heart must be steeled against human compassions, if the one has not known, if the other has not wept over, some shipwreck of faith of which we have here perhaps the explanation. The soul that should have 'behaved and quieted itself' has been 'exercised in great matters, in things too high for it:' and the result is that utter sweeping away of the faith and of the hope, which we can speak of in this house of God, with full assurance of sympathy, as a calamity than which there can be none greater.

There are minds—who shall gainsay it?—unqualified or disqualified for speculation. There are minds quick and shallow; capable of doubt, incapable of decision. There are minds undisciplined and uneducated, because they have not had the chance, or because they have flung the chance away. There are minds ignorant of the great gulf, fixed in reason, fixed in the nature of things, between doubting and disbelieving; minds for which the entrance of one doubt is the banishment of a million of certainties; minds destitute alike of the power to weigh and the power to number, insomuch that a sneer is as potent with them as a martyrdom, and one sentence of an infidel magazine is answer enough and to spare to the argument of eighteen centuries of Christian lives and deaths.

To minds such as these is it not unfortunate—we say

but that now—unfortunate, that the accident of the day and of the hour should have brought the suggestion of scepticism? Those of us who have seen the thing will say so; those of us who have seen the faith or seen the ministry of Jesus Christ abandoned and flung away because the insolence of a 'gnosis falsely so called' came across the path of a young man and told him that there can be no proof of that which you can neither touch nor taste nor smell. Would it not have been better for that intellect (so called) if it had never dabbled in speculation? Was it fit for it? Ought it not to have been differently trained—I had almost said, differently constituted—if it was ever to embark in it with advantage—by which I mean, with any prospect of finding the truth?

But these are our times, and as they are we must deal with them. It is idle to fold the hands in mournful regrettings. God has 'set the bounds of the habitation'—'Sparta is our lot, and we must adorn it.' We shall enter into no comparisons, save such as breathe thankfulness, between the days that are and the days that have been. The present is a disturbing force in such calculations: we cannot stand far enough off, even in imagination, to do justice to the picture. If we were not able to counsel, neither would we complain. But the subject which we have suggested is full of admonition—for each one of us, and for all.

It is impossible to live the life of this age, and not to enquire. Close ear and eye, scepticism is in the air. It was always in books, now it is in society. A whole table was challenged lately by the question, 'Is there any one so old-fashioned as to believe the Bible?' This

was an insolence, this was an outrage. But it only exaggerated, it only distorted, a fact. On that occasion there was one man brave enough to answer, 'I do'—and the courage told. But how shall a young man in such times, educated or uneducated, exercise that calming and hushing, that behaving and quieting, which the text speaks of? Who shall prescribe the right to speculate, and the no right? Who shall lay down the conditions, present or retrospective, under which a rational being, ordained or unordained, shall be at liberty to exercise himself in great matters, too high for him or for any man? It cannot be done. And if you attempt it, you are met instantly by the cavil, Then you would leave every man in 'the tongue wherein he was born:' Mussulman, Brahmin, Buddhist, every man has his religion: if the Christian is to be kept perforce within the confines of his tradition, he must allow to others the 'protection' which is the necessity of his own.

Brethren, I speak in this place—for this once more—to a powerful phalanx of young men. You have to go forth into this outspoken, this insubordinate, this free-thinking age. If you would, you cannot alter it. You must hear its wild talk, you must move with it in its bold swing. I can desire few things better for you than that you should dread it. It is a terrible world into which you are going; terrible in its strength, terrible in its daring. This age fears nothing—neither heaven above it, nor hell beneath. It has settled for itself that the latter is not—save as an embellishment of positiveness, save as an expletive of passion. It doubts much about the former: it is more than half inclined to think that nothing is but the material. It is encouraged in

these ideas by men of science, who ought to know that they themselves are moved and swayed by other forces besides the tangible. Theologians are not always consistent in their maintenance of the principle that Jesus Christ 'speaks that He doth know, and testifies that He hath seen.' They too coquet with the sceptic; offer to meet him half-way, and find, when they have done so, that he is in his cave still.

What I would presume to urge upon you in these days of your youth is this.

First, that you feel the responsibility of those decisions which will soon be forced upon you. Our age has one mark, I think, of a late place in the world's history, that there is a more resolute taking of sides for the great struggle; that there is less of that unmarked colourless Christianity which called Christ Lord—which counted infidelity a discourtesy and atheism an insult—yet had no word to say when the nominal Master was either dishonoured by immorality or trodden underfoot in His brethren. This is a gain more than a loss. It makes the gospel more real. The troops are drawing off, this way and that way, towards their positions. We are on the eve of a great battle.

We never felt, as now, the importance of education. You have heard to-day of minds unqualified or disqualified for great matters. There is no excuse for those who, having what you have here, go forth in this state to life's battle. O, if you would learn now to thank God for your reason—to thank God for your leisure—to thank God for your books, for your lectures, for your chapels, for your sacraments. These are, for you, like those 'days of the Son of Man,'

one of which afterwards you would give life itself to see again. How fearful, fearful for both worlds, if you should any of you go forth hence unskilled in judging between the true and the false, unable to separate between the precious and the vile, when the two present themselves in the next stage of your being, and you must choose between them for life and death, for the life and death of more than your own soul. An educated man might almost be defined as a man who is 'not soon shaken in mind, whether by word or spirit or letter,' because he has been taught by long discipline both to 'prove all things' and to 'hold fast that which is good.' The herd of sceptics may be led by an intellect—they have no intellect, generally speaking, of their own. They are at the mercy of loud talk and confident statement: it flatters while it undermines: it treats its hearers as simple, but it compliments them as wise.

Not then to foreclose thinking, but to prepare for it, is the work of all education that is worth the name. And such preparation will above all things enforce that preliminary 'calming and hushing' which the text tells of. It will remind the young man that this is not the first year of the century, and not the first year of the race. It will bid him remember that he himself has a past as well as a present, and that he cannot, if he would, cut himself off from it. On any supposition it must be necessary to take into account the circumstances, over which he had no control, of his birth, of his parentage, of his nationality, of his religion. We would say it to a Mahometan, we would say it to a Hindoo. There is a presumption in favour of the thing that is. There is

an antecedent probability on the side of the polity, on the side of the society, on the side of the opinion, in which you were born. To change a faith is a tremendous step: not without a moral compulsion ought it to be taken. To change from faith to no faith is a more fearful stride still: look around, above, within you—it is common prudence—ere you adventure it. These considerations are not decisive. If changes of faith were wrong, we should have no gospel. If to leave the religion of a man's fathers were wicked, we should have no day in our calendar for the conversion of St Paul. But seriousness, but awe, but reverence, but humility—these qualities are above all graces, when the question is at issue, Shall I relay my very foundations?

We will not say that there is always a want of seriousness in the scepticism of to-day. Amongst much playing at doubting there is also a struggle and a death-grapple which is worthy of the crisis. There are men living anxious lives, there are men 'standing in jeopardy every hour,' there are men dying many deaths daily, in the controversy, which they suffer no eye to watch over, between the spirit of faith and the spirit of doubting. We feel that, in the sight of infinite love, such men may be worthier, nobler, holier far than the easy, complacent, conventional worshipper, whose faith stands really in the tradition of his elders, and has never been made his own by the travail of fear and grief.

None the less may there be many a grievous error, many a deep-lying fallacy, in the process of that search. I will name two.

There are those who, so soon as a doubt enters, cease instantly to pray. They count it an insincerity to call

upon Him in whom they are not certain that they believe. The memorable words, 'When they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted,' are misread by them or disregarded. They do not see that to cease to worship is, not to doubt, but to cease to doubt. It is, to have settled the very question which they profess to be pondering. If there be a word of truth in the gospel, the way of faith is the way of prayer, and the man who has ceased to call upon the God of his life is no longer so much as an enquirer whether God has spoken to us in His Son.

There are some questions—let who will mock the saying—there are some questions which it is treason to humanity to open. Of such sort is the question of worship. The question, in other words, whether I am to myself sufficient or insufficient—whether I am to my own being the head and front, the source and spring, or certainly and at all costs an inferior, a dependent, a subject thing—impotent over the beginning, impotent over the continuance, impotent over the ending, of this unknown something which I call the life. If I knew not one word of the nature or the character or the will of the power above me, the recognition of dependence, which is the essence of worship, would equally be my necessity, equally my duty. Better kneel to an unknown God than kneel to nothing and to no one.

To kneel is the beauty and glory, to kneel is the truth and the hope, of the humanity that knows itself. Let the cry go forth even into the darkness—it shall 'calm and hush,' it shall 'behave and quiet,' the soul that would enquire, the soul that would know. They

worshipped although—yea, they worshipped because—they doubted.

Yet one other thing. Many, when the faith is shaken, count it an insincerity to listen to any evidence but what they call the logical. They resent it as almost a fraud put upon them if any one offers the moral beauty of the gospel, or the spiritual satisfaction to be found in it, or the cumulative force of recorded effects and consequences of believing, as furnishing, alone or all together, any argument at all in behalf of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Intellect alone, cold, hard, dry intellect, must be the tribunal of truth. If mathematical demonstration is impossible, then for them it shall be impossible to believe. That conviction which the first Christian doubter made to hang upon the sight and upon the touch, they suspend upon the cogency of the Christian syllogism as it stands for the nineteenth age.

We have entered our protest against this splitting and parcelling of the being. The man is one and but one. These separate personalities, of mind and heart, of intellect and affection, who gave them their authority and their superscription? If God speaks, He will speak, be sure, to the whole man. God is one, and the man is one: as such will he be dealt with, as such he must make reply. Intellect and heart and conscience—the power to judge, the power to admire, the power to adore—the instinct of truth, and the instinct of good, and the instinct of beauty—all these things must march as one towards the investigation of the divine: the thing which we believe must be the satisfaction of them all, and each one must contribute its quota to the evidence and its voice to the verdict.

The counsel of the text is the counsel of wisdom, when it makes reverence, when it makes humility, the condition of all knowledge that is worth the name. It is quite possible, by a little mismanagement, by a little spoiling, of the soul, to make the spiritual life intolerable. We may so educate and so discipline our own soul as that health shall be the reward. We may do the contrary. We may make ourselves fools, idiots, sceptics, atheists, if we will to do so, and if we take the way.

Plain words are the most suitable to solemn subjects. This humble, this reverent estimate of our position and relationship will show itself, first of all, in a willingness to attend to small duties; to overlook nothing as beneath notice; to adapt ourselves to circumstances, mental as well as providential; to condescend (as Scripture says) to things that are lowly; to expect happiness in duty rather than in acquisition; to live the life set us, rather than to spread and stretch ourselves into an imagined universe beyond. This principle does not forbid effort—does not discourage progress—does not depress the endeavour to make the very most of every talent, and to rise to any height of honest usefulness to which the powers given may be prospered by the blessing sought. All these are indeed but the natural exercises of the composed and tranquillized spirit.

Nor is the 'refraining and quieting' spoken of inconsistent with the utmost stretch of enquiry into the mysteries of nature, of humanity, of God. This too is fostered and strengthened by it. The difference is here—that, while the man who 'exercises himself in great matters' is apt first to isolate and then to idolize

intellect; to imagine that mental processes alone can carry him into the deep things (if there be such) of God Himself, and that whatsoever cannot be logically demonstrated cannot be certainly true; the other—not because he is afraid to seek, not because he dreads the break-down of faith under the strain of reason, but because he remembers that the being which he possesses is a complex thing, and must not be disjointed and taken to pieces in the very use of it for the highest of all conceivable purposes, the study of truth and of God—summons all and each part of himself to accompany the march, and refuses to regard that as proved, or that as disproved, which (at most) is so by one piece or one bit of him. Reason, and conscience, and heart, and soul too, shall all enter into the search, and that which satisfies not each and all of these shall not be for him either truth, or religion, or heaven, or God. 'Knowledge puffeth up—it is love which edifieth. If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same' knoweth—or, let me rather say—for, after all, divine knowledge, to be real, must be rather receptive than originative—'the same is known of God.'

'I have calmed and hushed my soul, as a child weaned of his mother.' Try this self-discipline, doubters in this congregation. Set yourselves humble duties. Live much in acts of charity—domestic, social, philanthropic. Enter into lives pinched by poverty. Help boys and young men to grapple with the stern realities of want, neglect, solitude, temptation. Intellectual difficulties must take rank after these. Go back to their pondering a more sympathetic and therefore a wiser man. See

whether some of them have not been solved by the new contact. Is not this gospel which looked so superfluous in the theatre and the ballroom, so assailable by sap or storm in the study or the lecture-room—is it not indeed the one appliance, the very panacea, when it is brought face to face with sorrow, with bereavement, with pain, with death? Then ask yourself—ask the whole of yourself—understanding, heart, conscience, soul—whether the thing so appropriate, so strong, so beautiful, so satisfying, may not—were it but for that reason—be *true*.

XXIV.

PURITY.

Titus i. 15.

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

St Matthew v. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

'CAREFUL and troubled about many things'—subtleties of doctrine, curiosities of speculation, punctilios of ritual—'one thing is needful.' Too often we frame to ourselves substitutes for it: more often still, we turn aside from its piercing scrutiny, its dazzling light, its condemning judgment. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—'He that hath the Son hath life;' and, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

The two texts are two motives. With one voice they enforce purity, but each by its own argument and with its own persuasion. The one looks rather at the present, the other at the future: the one sets before us a practical effect of purity, the other a spiritual: the one tells how it shall enable us to move healthily and wholesomely among our fellows; the other, how it shall fit and qualify us for that beatific vision which is, being interpreted, the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is needless that I should bespeak your attention—for the subject will secure that—to a few plain words this morning, spoken in misgiving and weakness, upon this mysterious, this indeed awful theme. Meditation is more than exhortation always, and not least here, where 'the voice from the excellent glory' is so solemnly audible, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'

We will spend no time in preliminary comments upon the place of the texts or the connection of the contexts. The former text is from an epistle, the latter text is from a gospel. The one is the saying of an inspired man, the other is the saying of the Lord from heaven. Of both the word 'pure' is the keynote. In the one expressly, in the other by clear implication, the purity spoken of is the purity of the heart. No formal, no ceremonial, no ritual scrupulosity; no mere cleanness of the hands from bribe or bloodshed; no mere refraining of the lips from the open utterance of evil; no mere keeping of the life from the actual commission, while the love of sin reigns in the will which is the man. The psalmist could distinguish between the 'clean hands' and the 'pure heart.' The precept of the least evangelical of the apostles has a twofold injunction—'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.'

1. St Paul is addressing a beloved convert, charged with the temporary oversight of the young church of Crete; a church planted, like the other early churches, in an unkindly and uncongenial soil, but, unlike some of them, amidst an exceptionally corrupt and unpromis-

ing people, over whom its one chance of influence must lie in an exceptionally pure and bright example.

Now there was a power at work in the Cretan congregations, as everywhere, which St Paul looked upon as the antagonist of the light and life which is in Christ Jesus. Strange to say, it took the form of a sort of ostentatious puritanism; it was an influence calling itself moral, sensitively jealous for law and sanctity, and dreading the gospel of grace as dangerous to virtue. St Paul knew better. St Paul had tried both systems, and he knew by experience that, whereas law is weak through the flesh, grace is mighty through the Spirit. He thought little of a righteousness isolating itself from atonement, or a purity dispensing with sanctification. The towers of these human builders may rise with fair promise upon the plain of this world's habitation, but they have only 'slime for mortar'—Babel is their name, and scattering is their story.

It is in the midst of stern words about these Judaizing meddlers that the grand maxim of the first text breaks in—'To the pure are all things pure.' Men may dispute and wrangle, like that anonymous Jew of old with John's disciples, 'about purifying:' but give not heed to these 'Jewish fables'—for such may Mosaic ordinances become when God has superseded them; these 'commandments of men'—for such, and no more, are the 'rudiments of the world,' when 'the fulness of the time' has replaced them by a completive revelation. I will tell you where alone purity can be found; in the heart made clean by grace, in the life set free by the Spirit. Be pure in heart, and all things are pure

to you. 'Give not heed to Jewish fables. To the pure are all things pure.'

If to any one the first sound of the words should be startling, as though St Paul were sanctioning by anticipation the antinomian inference, 'Live as you list; all things are lawful: be born of God, or think you are, and sin is sin no longer for the regenerate'—such an impression will be instantly removed by remembering who is the writer; sufficiently corrected even by the contrasted clause which follows, 'But to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.' The purity of which St Paul speaks is a purity loving only the pure, a purity abhorring all that is evil.

We have here then an alternative before us. Look on this picture and on that. 'I speak as to wise men; judge ye' between them.

To the defiled nothing is pure. Draw out the thought into detail, and what says it?

To a certain extent heathen moralists spoke before St Paul. They could tell how an impure heart breathes impurity into the whole atmosphere of the life. 'Out of the heart are the issues of the life;' because in the heart arise the thoughts, and the thoughts generate acts, and the acts establish habits, and the habits form the character, and give it its final complexion of good or evil. Thus, if the heart be defiled, the result must be the contamination of the living and moving and acting man. To the impure is nothing pure—not one occupation however innocent, not one companionship however delightful, not one office however sacred, not one relation however vital. The touch of that hand, its proffered gift, its kindly pressure, its well-meant service, has de-

filement in it: contact becomes contagion, affection itself becomes infection, where the taint of impurity festers within. Not for nothing was it written in the law, that the poor leper should warn off from himself the approach of the whole, by wearing the mourning of the bereaved, and by uttering, whithersoever he turned himself, the desolate cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' It was a figure for the time now and ever present—how sin secretly cherished becomes not more a disease than a pestilence; how to the impure nothing is pure—he carries defilement and contamination with him. Nay, even deeds as to which the man himself would once have exclaimed in indignation, 'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' may become little by little not only possible but quite natural, if the heart is but let alone by the strong, and the one stronger, coercion, of a resolute determination for virtue, and a superhuman indwelling of grace. Where the first of these is not, there is no chance—where the second of these is not, there is no certainty—of an uncontaminated and uncontaminating life. 'To the defiled and unbelieving,' for St Paul recognizes no infidel virtue, 'is nothing pure;' not the generous confidence of friend or brother, not the sacred trust of ward or pupil, not the fair beauty of love, not the law-girt sanctities of wedlock. Only to the pure are these things pure.

But St Paul goes far beyond this experience when he speaks of an intellectual defilement as the product of an impure heart. 'Even the mind,' he says, 'is defiled.' He is not speaking, you observe, of the use of the intellect in the service of impurity. His remark is far more striking and more profound. He speaks of the action of impurity upon the intellect

itself. That there have been in all civilizations, ancient and modern, bad men of genius—in other words, impure hearts employing intellectual gifts in the propagation of impurity—is matter of lamentable notoriety to all who know anything of the history of literature. This is only the alliance of heart and mind for a bad purpose. But St Paul speaks of the action of the one upon the other. He bids us mark the deterioration of intellect under the influence of an impure heart. Even in provinces not directly moral, even in provinces purely or predominantly intellectual, we can trace the operation. As a matter of course, the hand is less steady for difficult or delicate work this morning, which last night held the wine-cup; and the head deals less acutely with a question of business or a subject of discussion to-day, which was pursuing yesterday a vicious intrigue, or bestowing 'the visions of the bed' upon images of sensual indulgence. Let this kind of life be lived on till mid age, and we question if the faculties of the keenest, the most vigorous intellect will not have lost alike the sharpness of their edge and the versatility of their compass. Sometimes—it is a melancholy spectacle—we can trace the gradual decline of the finer powers of observation, taste, or expression, in essayist, poet, or novelist, as the life settles more and more steadily upon the lees of a low morality; and the impure heart bewrays itself more and more to the regretful reader by a coarser drawing and a more vulgar colouring in the productions of what must still be called genius.

There is one department of intellectual exercise—and it is the very highest of all—in which the man of

impure heart will almost certainly make shipwreck. It is that in which he addresses himself to the study of the great controversy between faith and unbelief; to the decision of the question of questions, 'What shall I think of Christ?' It would be as untrue as it would be disrespectful to make this the only explanation of the unbeliever's infidelity. Certainly in these times, however it may have been in a bygone generation, unbelief and immorality are no inseparable companions. We can almost imagine that there may be a growth, morbid perhaps but powerful, alike of self-control and of self-exertion, in one who has cut himself loose from the tradition of prayer and worship, and has undertaken, in full view of no very friendly critics, his own management, his own discipline, and his own perfecting. He has to prove to those around him that he can dispense with the help of God. An audacious enterprise we count it; but the very audacity is a stimulus—the very presumptuousness of the undertaking may be at once whip and spur to virtue. We must not be suspicious at the cost alike of reason and charity, or pretend that in all cases vice is the one parent of scepticism.

But the converse of this we may hold without any breach of charity. If infidelity is not always the offspring of impurity, certainly impurity is the natural parent of infidelity. It is the interest of impurity to disbelieve. From the days of the poet Cowper in the courts of the Temple, as in all the days before those and after, this has been the just retort of the infidel to the Christian profligate, 'Your creed condemns you; be as I am in creed, and then you and your life, like me and mine, will be at one.' Who shall gainsay the

cogency of that argument, whether it be urged by the voice from without, or by the voice within? Where the heart is impure, the mind is defiled by it. If in the knowledge of earth the heart can corrupt the head, shall it be less so in the knowledge of heaven? Shall we wonder that the gospel may be true and yet the intellect may miss it, if we find that, even in matters where there is no motive and no bias towards error, the mind is surely, if slowly, polluted and poisoned through the heart?

St Paul goes on to speak of the conscience (no less than the intellect) as sharing the purity or else the impurity of the heart. We might have supposed that the conscience, which is the arbiter of conduct within each of us, would be no more influenced by the moral state of the man, than the judge is corrupted, in his estimate of right and wrong, by the trial of any number of prisoners on charges of fraud or violence. Approval or disapproval, what St Paul elsewhere calls 'accusing or excusing,' has no obvious tendency to anything worse than weariness. We might expect the trial of the man by his conscience to go on day by day, with varying result, or even with uniform result, of acquittal or of condemnation, without incapacitating the tribunal itself for a just and righteous decision in any number of cases to be brought before it hereafter. We might have expected that the bad man would have always an uneasy life by reason of repeated convictions, of perpetual condemnations, by the judge to whom he is amenable, but from whom he cannot isolate himself for a moment. There is nothing at all self-evident in the statement of St Paul that the conscience itself shares

the defilement of the heart. That the admonitions of the conscience are weakened by their disregard; that they become less and less audible, less and less imperious, less and less alarming, by perpetual neglect, is a matter of experience: that they are corrupted by it, defiled by it, contaminated by it, is by no means obvious. Yet this is the statement. The impure heart makes the conscience itself impure. By degrees, it not only loses its sensitiveness to right and wrong—as familiarity with vice and crime in a police or divorce court may somewhat blunt the first sensibility of a magistrate or a judge, who yet is inflexible to evil: worse far than this—it comes even to confuse, to distort, and to invert its own vision, and to be no longer a trustworthy oracle when the man for once would consult it on some question of practical duty. So long has it been unenquired of, or enquired of only to be silenced, that at last it avenges itself upon the applicant by 'answering him according to his idols;' and the wicked king who asks, 'Shall I go up against this Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I forbear?' receives for reply, 'Go, and prosper;' or the dishonest prophet, who waits to know 'what God will say to him more,' hears in the night visions the explicit but ironical rejoinder, 'If the men call thee, rise and go with them.'

This is that judicial hardening, as theologians call it, which might with equal truth be denominated the judicial defiling. To the man of impure heart all things, not only action and habit, not only conduct or feeling, but intellect also, and conscience also, are contaminated and polluted with him.

On the other hand, 'To the pure all things are pure.'

Would you be able to pass hither and thither on God's earth, on God's business or man's, healthful and health-breathing—secure against harming, however unwillingly; secure against incurring harm, however unwittingly? Would you never have to ask, 'Can I adventure myself into that company, into that companionship, where all is adverse to charity or piety, to faith or virtue? can I go there armed in God's panoply, can I go there taking Christ with me, and be quite sure that I shall return unscathed, and that I shall leave a blessing behind me?' Would you be able to throw yourself into any enterprise whatsoever of love or pity, without dread of inordinate affection or subtle passion stealing into your work and poisoning at its source your stream of good? Would you be able to bring to every study—above all, to the highest—a mind calm and clear, an intellect unbribed and unbiassed, with no motive but the thirst for truth, and no desire but to hearken what the Lord God has to say? Would you be able to rely absolutely upon the voice within—to hear what a prophet has called the 'word behind you,' saying at each ambiguous turning, 'This is the way; walk thou in it?' Would you have no reason to dread from that voice an insidious hint, a treacherous direction, landing you perhaps on the dark mountains of bewilderment, or on the edge of that precipice which overhangs 'the pit of the abyss?' Then must you keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of the life—not more the words and the deeds of good or evil, than the processes of the mind that must think, and the decisions of the conscience that must judge.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ touches a tenderer chord when He places this amongst His beatitudes—'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.'

The motive was a strong one, which said, 'To the pure all things are pure.' Be pure in heart, and you shall find, or else make, purity everywhere. Be pure in heart, and intellect shall be pure, and conscience; no film shall cloud the mental vision, no stain shall sully the mirror of duty.

But, 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God'—this lifts the matter into a higher region still, and tells how, not mind alone, not conscience alone, but the very spirit and soul of the man, hangs upon purity of heart for its welfare and for its life.

'They shall see God.'

You read it perhaps as a promise for the remote future. Be pure in heart while you live, and when you die you shall be in heaven.

We are not of them that would disparage the pursuit of heaven. The instinct of life is strong in us; not least in those who profess indifference; not least, always, in those who say that they are in love with death. If it is a virtue, or certainly not a vice, to be tenacious of the half-life, can it be a crime to seek earnestly that consummation of the being which an apostle (rightly interpreted) calls the 'acquisition of the soul?' Then first shall we know the fulness of being, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and mortality is swallowed up of life.

He cannot be a mean man—is it not a cruel trifling with words to call him a selfish man?—who is resolute

at all costs to win heaven. Does it augur well, even for greatness, to talk that cant of some theologies—except it be in the sense of one who knew no unrealities, and who revoked the thought as he uttered it—'I could wish myself'—I was about to wish, but I will not—'accursed from Christ for my brethren?' Not so spoke St Paul, when he spoke without parable: then it was, 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling'—'I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended of Christ Jesus.'

Let no man be ashamed of an intense thirst for heaven. Everything grand and disinterested and beautiful springs directly out of it. This it was, Scripture tells us, which motived the devotion of Abraham, and the heroism of Moses, and all the righteousnesses of which the world was not worthy; this it was, the same Scripture tells, which made One greater than the sons of men 'endure the cross, despising the shame,' because beyond all and through all He saw 'the joy that was set before Him,' the work of the humiliation accomplished, and the gate of life opened to all believers.

There is a sight of God in the far future. Brethren, there is also a sight which is now. Certainly there is a *not* seeing, a deprivation of the sight, in this present. Cherish but for one moment an impure thought—instantly God is hidden. You may be on your knees when the thought enters—instantly the mercy-seat is empty. If in this strange, this mysterious being there has ever come into you, for ever so brief a moment, an unruly passion, a forbidden lust; if it has found entertainment, lodgment, tolerance, but for once, but for one instant, in the chambers of imagery; still

more, if it has taken possession—for we must not play at preaching, as though angels, not men, were our auditory—if in boyhood or youth, if in manhood or age, there has been a weak yielding to temptation, a fall acted over again as erst in paradise; I ask, and I know the answer, was there not also, in the same instant, for the same period, a driving out—O, the old Bible is not a dead letter—a driving out from God's presence even of the man that had once known it; aye, and a flaming sword turning every way, to bar against you that tree of life, which is, being interpreted, the sight of God?

Thus it is with the not seeing, with the withdrawal of the sight. Can we appeal with equal confidence to an opposite experience? Can I tell, still reading only these memories before me, of some hour of glorious or at least blessed victory—some temptation, very real and very definite and very obstinate, yet manfully repelled in the strength of God—and then angels, and more than angels, coming to minister, to wash the wounds and recruit the energies of the combatant that had kept his purity, that had withstood in the evil day? Was there not, in that hour, a fulfilment of the saying, 'They shall see God?' a vivid perception, then and there, of His reality, and of His presence, and of His power, and of His love, who said once to His servant, and still says to each one who listens and waits for Him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness?'

If there be in any of us the desire, hereafter or here, to see God; to see Him in His beauty, and to see Him in His goodness, and to see Him in His truth; if we feel that not to see Him is misery, that never to see Him

would indeed be 'the second death'—we must become pure in heart. O, I know, I know too well, how stern, how condemning, is that mandate of purity, falling upon the ear, and wakening the memory, and quickening the conscience, which is writing bitter things against itself, and most justly, while it listens. You were reminded last Sunday how, when Jesus Christ, with that poor sinful woman before Him, whom hostile Pharisees had dragged there that they might have to accuse Him, instead of passing upon her the sentence either of acquittal or of condemnation, said only to them, 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her,' they all, one by one, from the oldest to the youngest, 'convicted by their own conscience,' stole away while He stooped and wrote; aware that, if that was the condition, not one could be the executioner. That incident is a parable for all time. No gospel record is more redolent of inspiration. Its authorship is (for us at least) anonymous; but a 'God-breathed scripture' is, if anywhere, there. Other commandments may be rehearsed before us, and though we ask God's mercy for our breach of them, it is as a thing of course, if it be not as a form, that we confess ourselves guilty. But this one, the statute of purity, raises a blush on the very heart.

Brethren, let us not misinterpret the commonness, I had almost said the universality, of the self-condemnation. Let us not lay to our souls the flattering unction of the necessity of impurity, of the impossibility of being pure. Let us not say, in this sense at least, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? how can he be clean that is born of a woman?' Let us not say in our

hearts, We must acquiesce in something less than a cleanness whiter than snow—we must (for that is the equivalent) despair of the purity that shall see God.

To despair of purity is one temptation: to heal impurity slightly is another. There are those whom pride has kept clean; there are those whom a fastidious taste, a delicate nature, a cold disposition, a dread of consequences, has preserved from this particular form of evil. Let them not therefore write themselves pure with that purity which shall see God. And there are those, once again, whom the blessing of God upon a holy home, upon wise and watchful training which preoccupied them for this particular innocence, may enable, this day, with a clear conscience, to plead the 'not guilty' under the indictment of this sermon. Yet even these last may not be living, day by day and in all things, in that light, which is also the sight, of God.

It is a more pathetic voice, however, than any of these which pleads with us to-day for some help and some guidance in the way of peace. It is the voice of one who has gone very far from original righteousness, who has lost the innocence of childhood, and not yet replaced it with the one thing better—the virtue of a Christian manliness, and the strength of a divine grace. To him it is the special office of the servant of the Lord to minister; telling him of 'a balm in Gilead,' of 'a physician there,' who came to die for us, and who lives to save. 'Take with you words,' and go to Him—words of confession, words of sorrow, words of shame—pray for that 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' which He has set side by side with purity of heart among His beatitudes; pray for grace to place yourself once for all

on His side against your own faults and sins; pray for strength as your day, for perseverance in the good fight, for final victory as you draw your last breath. Remember that this prayer pledges you also to effort. You must not parley with this terrible foe; they least of all, into whose heart he has once found entry. Seek the companionship which is good for you; eschew that which is evil. Endure hardness as the good soldier. Make the body serve, never let it rule. Watch for the sight of God. When you kneel praying, let Him not go except He bless you. Wait for the opening of the throne-room—for that answer of peace, which is the sight of God here. Pray without ceasing for that Holy Spirit who is His own witness to the heart that lets Him in. When you fall, rise again—first to your knees, then to put on once more the helmet of hope. Never despair, never presume. 'By little and little,' such is the promise, 'this kind of evil spirit goes out'—and he rends a man sore in the dispossessing.

At last, though the body of humiliation cannot quite be refashioned in this life into an immunity from the assaults of this one temptation, there shall come a time when it shall be recreated into the likeness of Christ's body of glory; when He who for us 'once suffered Himself, being tempted,' shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Then at last we shall be like Him—for we shall see Him as He is.

XXV.

THE IMPOTENCE OF MAN IN ANTAGONISM TO THE TRUTH.

2 Corinthians xiii. 8.

We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

THIS wonderful man is bringing to a close the most wonderful of his epistles. Nowhere else does he stand out before us in so complete and so vivid a personality. That marvellous union of strength and tenderness; that rapidity of transition from passion to pathos, and back again; that rugged, massive, vehement force of language, broken here and there by passages, equally natural, of matchless grace and beauty—has found in this second epistle to Corinth its fullest scope, its widest sweep, its grandest opportunity. St Paul has had to deal here with suspicions, with imputations, with accusations, which threatened his very existence as an evangelist and as an apostle. Every little change of plan, in the most insignificant matters of all—the time of a journey, the order of a circuit—has been distorted by his enemies at Corinth into an instance of vacillation, into an evidence of cowardice. Even his disinterestedness in refusing a pecuniary maintenance from congregations which he served, from churches which he had planted, was twisted into a proof of conscious unsoundness in his very footing and standing as an apostle of

Christ. There is no single point in his armour which has not been tested by the stiletto of jealousy. The whole letter bristles with allusions, which only the microscope of intense study can make intelligible, to taunts and cavils current amongst its readers, and needing therefore no explanation, for them, to give meaning and point to his answers.

It is a great comfort, amidst so many anonymous and so many challenged authorships of books of the Bible, to have just this one name, this one character, this one person, placed above the reach of assault from the most reckless and the most unscrupulous of freethinkers. There is not a fact of the gospel, there is not a feature of Jesus Christ, which is not presupposed, and which is not reproduced, in this one undisputed epistle of the man Saul of Tarsus, notorious in earlier days as a bitter foeman of Christ and of the Christians, more notorious afterwards as a convert to the faith which once he sought to exterminate —in both characters a historical person in the world of action and in the world of letters; of whom we can judge to-day for ourselves with a knowledge far more intimate and far more thorough than that which we possess of Cæsar or of Cicero—yes, I will venture to say it, of any man living or lately departed, famous in politics or famous in literature.

The text occurs within seven verses of the end of the letter. The tone of these last verses is that of a man who feels that he has conquered. The lost ground at Corinth has been recovered at the point of the sword, and he speaks his last words with all the confidence and with all the authority of one who is about to re-enter his capital in triumph.

A word or two will give the key to the text and context.

St Paul is on his way to Corinth, apparently (from the letter, though not from the Acts) for the third time. He is anticipating a visit peaceful on the whole, but with some painful exceptions. A small minority is still against him; inclined, from various motives, to ignore or to resist him. The matter, he says, is not, only or chiefly, personal. There is still a root of bitterness, he fears, in the church's garden; and he must deal with it judicially. He has warned them, and he repeats the warning, that, if he comes again, he will not spare. They have asked a proof of his commission, and they shall have it. The same voice which in earlier days consigned Elymas the sorcerer to a temporary blindness, and which, in this very church, by letter, delivered a scandalous sinner to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, shall speak again, if they will have it so, to make sin suffering, with all the authority of the Lord of the churches, who once indeed took upon Himself man's weakness, and in it endured the cross, but who now, raised from death, dieth no more, and in whom man's weakness becomes instinct with divine strength. 'We shall live with Him,' we shall share His vitality, 'in the exercise of the very power of God Himself upon you.'

You would examine me—examine yourselves. Can you stand the test of sincerity and reality in your Christian profession? That is the question—the question always of concern and consequence to the man who is readiest to judge and to condemn. For myself, he says, and for my apostleship, you may be at ease. I can stand the test, the test severe and awful, to which

you would subject me—Does Christ speak in me? does Christ bind and loose in heaven as I bind or loose below?

Yet, though I thus speak, know that I desire not the opportunity of thus proving my apostleship. My prayer is, that you do no evil—that you be upright and pure in your life and in your walk: and this, not that I may have the credit of it; not that the state of the church of Corinth may redound to my glory as its pastor and its evangelist; no, from this better and nobler motive, the desire (without one side-look or selfish regard) that you may be what you ought to be, though that very integrity of yours shall rob me of the opportunity of asserting myself. It is only sin, against which apostleship can prove itself in punishing—do that which is right, and the rod falls from my hand. Be it so. Let me be a 'reprobate'—one whom men call so, and who cannot refute them—may you but be holy and without blemish. 'For we have no power against the truth, but only for it.' Be you with the truth, of gospel faith and gospel living, and upon you the apostolical powers, in the form of punishing, shall become instantly as though they were not: the truth, and every man that loves and does it, is exempt from the jurisdiction which is punitive only to the evil.

This magnificent unselfishness is before us in each feature and each lineament of the blessed apostle. He cares not what happens to him—what injustice of contempt or calumny, what disparagement of powers or motives, what loss of opportunity of self-vindication or self-assertion—may but his churches be strong in faith and pure in conduct. If this disinterestedness,

going to the length of a willing self-effacement, were but characteristic of all who put their hand in this our day to the service of their country or to the ministry of Jesus Christ; what might not be hoped for in the influence of the church upon the world—a world keen-sighted but not always malevolent; grieved sometimes that it cannot see with us the beauty of holiness and the certainty of a heaven? Let it see this—that the Christian man and the Christian minister cares more for the work than he cares for the workman—and a new page is written instantly in the book of evidence—a page full of grace, and a page full of persuasion.

But now I would take the text itself, and see what it says to us, not so much in its application by St Paul, as in its wide and grand principle.

'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.'

We shall read it as a lesson in human greatness and littleness; in the power, and the limitation of the power, of the human being, in all its provinces and in all its workings.

'Truth' is a word of large compass, but of uniform definition. Truth is reality. Truth is that which is: falsehood is 'the thing nothing'—the non-entity—that which may seem to be, but is not. Whatsoever then has reality in it—the reality of substance and essence, of stability and permanence—has place within St Paul's great axiom, 'We can do nothing against it, but only for it.'

We may illustrate the maxim in three ways.

1. Truth has a meaning in reference to human science. In the region of the material, that which has been

established by diligent search, by careful observation, by wide and large comparison, is true, has being, is an integral portion of the thing that is—and every reasonable person so will regard it. To fight against it, to clamour against it, to be frightened at it, lest it should conflict with something else that is, however surely believed or however solemnly important, is not rational, is not sensible, is not reverent. That fact, unless you can disprove it by counter-evidence, by further search or wider comparison, is as much a part of the truth, in its own line and region, as anything else that God has made or done or spoken. You can do nothing against it. You must recognize, you must receive, you must register it, till you can fit it in, or even if you never can fit it in, among your other recognitions and your other experiences.

Simple as all this sounds, there are those who cannot accept it. Each new discovery alarms them, even in realms remote from the Bible. Investigation itself is viewed with suspicion—dogged at each step by the hint of danger or by the imputation of unfriendliness. At the exact point where knowledge stood when they were in the cradle, there it must remain at least till they are in the grave. The most violent of all breaches with the letter of Scripture, such as those of Copernicus and of Galileo, they have grown up with and they are used to: but the stand must be made somewhere, and for them it shall be made at the attainment of the last year or of the present generation.

What calmness, what dignity, would it give to the Christian, if he were able to say to himself, Truth and the truth can never really be at variance. I know but

in part, and in very small part: but of this I am assured, that the God of the Bible is the God also of nature, and that that which He has really spoken in the one cannot really contradict that which He has really made in the other. Therefore I wait, and I rest, and I trust. Either I have somehow misread my Bible, or there is an explanation and there is a consistency somewhere out of sight. Certainly I can *do* nothing against the truth.

It is quite otherwise with human theories. They are not yet parts of the truth. They may never be so. They are attempts to combine facts, or attempts to explain facts, or (sometimes) attempts to manipulate facts: they can only prove themselves by an enormous lapse of time and an immense concurrence of coincidences. It is by no means true that men can do nothing against *them*, for they have been disproved and they have been displaced and they have been scouted, by the hundred and by the thousand, all along the ages.

But facts once proved are a part of the truth of which it is written that we can do nothing against, but only for it. Happy is he who preserves his balance, alike of faith and patience, amidst any number of surprising, startling, and at first shocking discoveries in the realm of real science—which is, being interpreted, the knowledge of the thing brought into being, the thing kept in being, the thing controlled and directed and managed in being, by God Himself, the Creator and Preserver and Ruler of all.

We can do nothing against the truth: what can we do for it?

It is easy to see how the Christian student and the Christian teacher may help the onward march of truth

by an attitude towards it of respect and deference, of interest and gratitude. They can assure the toilers in the field of science that, so far from dreading and so far from disparaging the results of their labour, they recognize in them fellow-workers in the cause of God and man; they bid them God speed; they are confident that nothing but good can be the ultimate issue of the most intense study, of the most fearless exploration, of the handywork of God in the universe of His creation.

And of them on their part the Christian asks two things only, and asks even these for the very truth's sake. First, that science will continue this day, as in the years that are past, to worship while she explores. Secondly, that at all events she will exercise towards workers in other fields that forbearance and that respectfulness which they manifest towards her; that she will never allow herself, lest she bring into just disrepute her own province of truth, to speak contemptuously or to speak mockingly of their efforts or of their subjects—as though existence itself, as though at any rate certainty, were cribbed and cabined in the visible and the tangible; as though there were no vast region at all within which telescope and microscope give no vision—when she must know that she herself fills but a small place, however important, among the realities of man's being, unable to explain to him either his origin, or his nature, or his destiny; unable to ignore, yet powerless to comfort, his sorrows; impotent to give either answer to his questionings, satisfaction to his aspirations, peace to his troubled conscience, or hope to his dying bed. Science herself may be a fighter against the truth. She is so instantly when she arrogates to herself the whole of it;

assuming the non-existence of a world which may be (for anything she can possibly know) as real as her own —the world of human spirit, and the world of the life of God.

We are powerless against the truth: we are not powerless, in God's strength, for it.

2. When our Lord spoke, as He sometimes did, of 'doing the truth,' He taught us that the text has place in the world not of knowledge but of life. There are such things as reality and unreality, truth and falsehood, in the realm of action. When we speak of a true man and a false man, we are pointing in this direction. Virtue is truth, in contrast with vice. Morality is truth, in contrast with wickedness. The one is reality, substance, essence: the other is shadow, semblance, falsehood. Good itself is truth, in contrast with evil, which is always hollow, shallow, and evanescent. 'We can do nothing against the truth, but only for it,' has an application to that alternative which is before each one of us each day in the management of himself.

There are men—historical persons, some of them—who have thought, in this sense, to do something against the truth. Men who have defied the morality of their generation, outraged the proprieties of society, and hoped by the force of position, or by the force of genius, to put down virtue herself, to the extent at least of their own persons and their own surroundings. They have tried it—have they succeeded? Has it in the long run answered, even for them? Has not the judgment of the very next generation, has not the judgment (on the whole) even of their own, gone against them? Has not the truth been too strong for them? In nothing

has the application of the word 'truth' to morals been more powerfully attested, than in the failure of these champions of a new licence, whether by example or by writing, to move from its firm base, by one inch or by one hair's breadth, the impregnable rock of the human instinct as to the virtuous and the vile.

But, for one man who attempts this audacious enterprise, thousands and tens of thousands have hoped to do something on a smaller scale and in a quieter way against that truth which is virtue. Who, almost, in this congregation, can look back to no day and no year of his life when he was, in his own hidden self, the antagonist (in this sense) of the truth? Where is he—so happy shall I call him, or so self-ignorant?—who could have stood up in that grim circle of Pharisaic accusers to accept the challenge of the one sinless, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone?' It was not only that particular assemblage—it would have been the same if it could have happened here to-day—which went out, convicted by its own conscience, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.

Then the appeal lies to all of us. And it is this. Did you find, in that day or in that year of sinning, that you were able, practically, to do anything against the truth? Did you find, or did any man ever find, that he had any real success in that war? Was it happiness, was it peace, while the sin reigned in you? Was there not always something, call it what you might, which embittered the day after, if not the night of, the sinning? Can you hesitate to say that you had proof—a proof coextensive and commensurate with your experience of the matter—that there was a power around you and

over you which on the whole (to use a modern phrase) made for righteousness?

No man grown to man's estate will feel the slightest disposition to gainsay the old utterance, There is no doubt on which side God is, in the great world-wide and age-long war between vice and virtue. It is not needful to bring into the question probabilities (though they are great) of detection and punishment, of disgrace and ruin, as the result and consequence of sinning. You need not wait for these: possibly, just possibly, you might wait long for them. But there is a witness never waited for; and that is 'the spirit of the man which is in him.' He that would do anything against the truth of virtue must needs go out of the world—no, he must needs go out of himself. It is only—if it is even then—it is only by drugging and deadening conscience, through a length and an obstinacy of sinning which makes the man himself half beast half devil—it is only thus that you can succeed in doing anything against the truth, even in your own single being. And who shall call this a victory, which is to be won only by a moral suicide, which knows neither repentance nor forgiveness, whether in this world or in that which is to come?

Brethren, we can do nothing against the truth which is virtue. Can we do something for it?

I address here, in large part, a congregation of the young. In the same degree is this an assembly powerful, if it will have it so, in the cause of the truth. It is comparatively little to see an old man, or to see a family man, or to see a clergyman, virtuous. It is expected of him. Men think too slightingly sometimes of the difficulty for some men of being virtuous ever. But the

terror and the horror of being vicious under those circumstances operates no doubt powerfully in aid of higher motives, where the case is so. Who shall speak of the 'power for the truth' which is yours, young brethren, in this place and at the age now present? Just in proportion as the life is young, and the snares are many, and the observation is close and vigilant, is the marvel for some, the admiration for some, the persuasion for some, the envy (unspoken) for many, if you stand stedfast—if so much as the breath of suspicion never touches you. Then can you plead here and there for truth against the lie, and be listened to. Then can you, without pleading—and the eloquence of silence is often the noblest—influence one or two, of your nearest and dearest, at that age when love is so strong and devotion so ardent, to walk with you or after you in the way of purity which is the way of peace. You are powerless in the long run against the truth; but you are mighty and shall prevail if you are for it.

3. When St Paul used the word 'truth,' he was not thinking of science, he was scarcely thinking of virtue. 'The truth' for St Paul was the sum and substance of it embodied in Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel. Our last word to-day must read the divine maxim before us in that sense, with that interpretation.

'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely'—these, for St Paul and for all who are like-minded with him, are contained and concentrated in the gospel. And what he here says is, that over one who

lives the gospel the arm of judgment, even of apostolical judgment, is instantly arrested and paralyzed—'for we can do nothing against the gospel but for it.'

Many are they in our own age, many there have been in past generations, who think or thought that they could (in this sense) do something against the truth. Open antagonists and secret, outspoken infidels and false brethren, have tried to bring the faith of Christ into doubt, disrepute, or ridicule; have assailed it from within, by parading its discrepancies and its difficulties; have assailed it from without, by pronouncing the whole thing, the whole conception, a self-contradiction and a monstrosity. Now and then they have even seemed to make a point, to strike down a champion, to lay low a standard-bearer—in some corner of the field, to have made an impression, to have gained a victory. St Paul says, All this may have been, may be again: men have seemed to do something against the truth, chiefly because of the timidity of professed believers, who flee when no man pursueth, and count the faith slain when in reality it is neither scarred nor touched. But, he adds, turn away for a moment, and then look again—*is* the truth overborne? Is the gospel weaker to-day than it was five, ten, fifteen centuries aforetime? Were there ever more diligent students of the Bible, were there ever more earnest men of prayer, were there ever more holy lives, were there ever more Christian deaths, than in this eightieth year of this nineteenth age? Are the impugners of the faith satisfied? Are they at peace in themselves? Can they look with any one hope to that leap into darkness which for them is dying? Do you hear no laments over their own lost convictions, over

their own departed days of believing and worshipping—no envious lookings upon men that have hope and can give reason for it—no anxious, no pathetic longings that their children may be Christians—no self-desponding, no self-despairing farewells to Christian brothers and sisters nearing the rapid river, and able to gaze stedfastly as they do so upon the golden gates of the celestial city beyond it?

Brethren, we do not deny that it is in the power of any man, young or old, to be an antagonist of the gospel. Any fool can parody verses of the Bible; can say smart things against creeds or articles; can raise a laugh against the peculiarities of conscientious and God-fearing men. And some of these things will stay by us when we are gone forth into the world of trial and difficulty; will rise before us in moments of serious devotion; will mix ludicrous images with our prayers; will make it harder to be good than it need have been, even when the great turn has come in the direction of faith and duty.

This you can do, if you will. Yes, you may read infidel books, and reproduce among your friends their arguments or their invectives. It is quite possible that you might even make a believer into an infidel, and have the misery of hearing, late on in life, that such or such an associate or intimate of yours here has lived without God in the world, and has died without hope in his end.

Such are the powers which we possess against the truth which is the gospel. Thus far can we go, and no further. We may stamp out its influence upon our own heart or upon the heart of a brother. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, as much in soul as in body.

The will is the man—and the will is free. Why God does not bind it, for its own sake and for the sake of another, is the real mystery—along with the mystery of evil itself: we must bow before it, and tremble.

But the truth itself, which is the gospel—against that you have no power, no, not one jot nor one tittle. 'The word of God is not bound.' The only, only question is, shall it emancipate, shall it gladden, shall it save *me*? Others, by thousands and tens of thousands, it is stirring, it is charming, it is blessing and saving, day by day.

If we can do nothing against, can we do nothing for it?

The gospel, like its Lord, is unselfish. It seeks not yours but you. It does not want your help—it wants your happiness. Not till you have embraced it—not till you feel its light and its heat—not till you find it what the Psalmist calls your delight and your counsellor—will it accept anything of you. Generous, disinterested, self-sacrificing Lord! Not till Thou hast saved can we serve Thee.

But then, when this is, we can do something, each one, for the truth. We can add one little chapter, one quiet page, to its evidences. We can show that it is powerful, by yielding ourselves to its influence. We can show, by our example, that its whole tendency is towards that which is good, that which is happy, that which is beautiful, its enemies themselves being judges. Yes, we can say, with more than the lips, 'Come and see,' when men ask you, Is there anything in it? 'can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?'

So, when the last day of life comes, and with your will

or against it you must stretch forth helpless hands, and be girded for the mysterious journey; your last breath shall be drawn, not in the disconsolate cry, 'O Galilean, Thou hast conquered!' but rather in the confiding utterance, hallowed by the dying lips of saints and martyrs, 'I know in whom I have believed—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

XXVI.

HOME RELATIONS.

Ephesians iii. 14, 15.

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

THERE can be no doubt that the right rendering is, 'every family.' And there is a further point unavoidably lost, in the word 'family' itself. St Paul says, 'For this cause I bow my knees (in prayer) unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven and upon earth, is named'—derives that name of 'fatherhood.' The force of the saying lies in the πατὴρ and the πατριά. Every human family is such in virtue of a divine Father. Every little section of the great society, which is the sum total of rational, moral, and spiritual being, is combined and cemented into its separate unity by the fact that it has a Father in heaven, the spring and source of all being, and the designer and founder of each single knot and group of being.

The text gives great dignity and even sanctity to this night's subject. It is a subject never unsuitable where a congregation of human beings, men or women,

is gathered into one place. So much does home life lie at the root of all life—so primary an element is the home in all that makes or is the life—that the mention of it, with its duties, or, to use a wider term, its relations, must always be appropriate, must everywhere be suggestive, must, I think, almost always and almost everywhere be stirring and reproving to the conscience of those who listen and (let me add) of him who speaks.

But if everywhere, how much more here, how much more this evening, where the hearers are young men—inmates still (for the most part) of homes where parents still living dwell, and, more yet than this, have their hearts full of a very recent parting, and would fain be told something or reminded of something by which they may still cherish and cultivate a relationship now for a while to be of faith not of sight.

It is impossible not to be struck by the sight of this congregation. This is, in a more than common sense, a voluntary service. I cannot but feel it as a sign of life in this great University, that such a service should have been instituted by its elder, and accepted so cordially by its younger members. May a blessing from on high not be wanting to us, while we resume these services to-night after a long interval, and would fain give a profitable tone to their new start and to their year's course.

Our subject is the brief compound—Home Relations.

And one passing word may be given to the question, What is 'home?' St Paul tells us that it is a society which has God for its founder; and we have only to add to this that it is a society of which each individual father is the human centre. The parental presence is the home.

Place is no part of it. We may speak of the home of our childhood, or the home of our youth, and mean by this the particular house in which days full of delightful memories were spent, and from which to have been uprooted by circumstance adverse or prosperous was a trouble and a sorrow never to be compensated—but, after all, the home itself moves with the parents, and the essence of it is still amidst all change the parental presence.

Now the home thus defined may be of various, even of opposite characters. There are good homes and bad homes. There are homes of beautiful example, tender affection, and beneficent influence. There are homes of mere self-indulgence, teaching no better lesson than that of the utter unsatisfactoriness of a life lived to itself. There are homes of pitiable discord, where the best hope of the best of sons is that he may be the gentle and persuasive mediator, determined to veil what he cannot honour, and to do his difficult duty alike and equally towards two incongruous characters whose one chance of harmony lies in him. We have seen such instances: we have seen the painful task nobly accomplished, whatever the final issue in success or failure.

These last words show us that home does not cease to be home because its characteristics are not home-like. Home is the parental presence—and neither unworthiness nor ungodliness nor open evil can either abrogate its rights or destroy its responsibilities. 'Home' has its 'relations' still, even where pain and grief are the sum of them.

The question has suggested itself, whether Christianity,

whether Christ Himself, makes much of home duties—whether the new relationship of redemption and grace has not superseded, or thrown quite into the background, the old tie of the human sonship. It cannot be denied that many young converts have rushed to that conclusion. The new duty, of witnessing and testifying, has been made to justify and even to sanctify the uttermost disregard of parental requests, wishes, and feelings. Nor can it be denied that a few strong expressions fell from our Lord's own lips, which, standing alone and taken literally, might seem almost to abolish the natural for the spiritual relationship. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother...he cannot be my disciple.' Of course, a better instructed interpreter sees in such expressions nothing more than a strong utterance of the principle, that in comparison with duty to Christ every other relationship must stand aside. And we have no need to interpret for Him what He has so emphatically interpreted for Himself—in three ways, to mention no others to-night. (1) By His own example of filial duty. 'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them'—continuing, till the age of thirty years, the humble dweller in a village and cottage home, without one assertion of divine claim or mission as making Him independent of the commonest home relations. (2) By His keen and indignant reproof of those who would withhold from father or mother one single thing which might be for profit or comfort to them, on the plea that it was 'Corban,' that is to say, a consecrated offering. (3) Thirdly, and to my mind far above all, by His taking the earthly relationship of father and son as the one sufficient type of

the superhuman relationship of man to his God—always speaking of God Himself under that title, and making this the address of all the prayers of His people, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven.' With such expressions of His mind and will, we need scarcely carry on the enquiry into the writings of His apostles, or wait for their strong and repeated enunciation of the everlasting stringency of the fifth commandment of the decalogue, 'Honour thy father and mother—which is the first commandment with promise.'

We cannot forget how the voice of divine inspiration has made the condition of our home relations the test of a standing or falling national virtue. The Old Testament closes, the New Testament opens, with that definition of the Elijah mission as the reprover and restorer of all things, 'He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' 'He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' The very substitution of the clause, 'and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,' for the original of Malachi, 'and the hearts of the children to their fathers,' seems suggestive at least of the connexion between filial estrangement and a general ungodliness—between a heart undutiful and a heart irreverent—a son alienated from his father, and a man alienated from his God. 'He shall turn the hearts of the children to their fathers,' is, in other words, 'He shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.' It is remarkable, in this connexion, that we do

not find any express mention in the Baptist's ministry of a special appeal to parents and children, such as he addressed to the soldiers, the publicans, the Pharisees, or the people at large. Parental and filial discord was not so much one single example, it was a general description rather, of the dislocation and disorganization of society which he was sent to remonstrate with and to heal.

Most true and certain it is, that the state of the homes is the state of a population. If you would know what society is, you must examine the family. The terrible thing is, when you find in the lower classes of the national life an early abandonment of the home, or a stay within it on the footing of an absolute and avowed independence. In many of our great towns, the daughter, as well as the son, is a lodger: the contribution, which is her bounden duty, to the family resources takes the form of a rent for board and lodging, which, on the first word of rebuke or restraint, she can, with or without notice, simply carry elsewhere. The religion of the family, such as it is, is not a family religion: each member of the family goes his or her own way, on the day of rest, to church or chapel, to this or that church, to this or that chapel, in absolute disregard of the wish of the parent or of the companionship of brother or sister. The family life is a rope of sand, without recognition and without cohesion.

Is not that a true word, a divine insight, which traces all the faults and all the sins and all the crimes of that nation to its root and source here? Is it not the estrangement of fathers from sons, and of children from parents, which makes the world, our world, the wilder-

ness it is? Is it not at this point that the Elijah must begin his restoring, that the Elisha must throw in his healing salt, if the restoration is to be thorough, if the cure is to be vital?

These gross and vulgar forms of home dissension are of course not those of *our* social standing. If the same evil exists amongst us, it will manifest itself in a different way—under a veil and mask, probably, of many lingering civilities and kindlinesses. Nevertheless the principle of the same disorganization may be at work even here. We cannot with any confidence attempt the comparison, in this matter, of one age of the world, or one generation of our own country, with another. There were undutiful sons, we know, from the first days—undutiful sons in Canaan and the wilderness—undutiful sons in every country of heathendom and of Christendom—undutiful and unnatural sons, in high places and low, in the last century of our own England. And it would be gross exaggeration to say that there are not thousands of homes, gentle and simple, in our own country to-day, where the relationships of parents and sons are exercised in beautiful harmony, with all the reverence on the one side, with all the tenderness on the other side, with all the love on both, of which that most gracious, most divine institution is capable.

And yet, is the restorer's office absolutely superfluous to-day? Is there no such want amongst us as the turning of hearts to each other, in the relation of sons and fathers? You will not say it—no, not even you, though I address here the most favoured class of all—in many respects, the most exemplary. We must not exchange

compliments here—we must try to reach hearts, to ouch consciences. We know, by ourselves, from our own observation, alas from our own experience, that it is quite possible to have great estrangements, of heart and feeling, quite decently and decorously glossed over. (1) There is a selfish neglect of the home, in presence or absence, quite possible, quite easy, without one disrespectful word spoken. (2) There is even a contemptuous treatment possible—as though the young knew better than the old, had a revelation all their own of the thing that is manly and the thing that is proper and the thing that is universal. (3) And there is a slight, silly, trifling treatment possible—a general levity, of tone and manner, making all serious counsel, making all grave conversation, making all true sympathy, out of the question—silencing all that is deep or high, all that is really great and really heavenward, in the intercourse between a man and his father, between a man and his mother, between a man and his brother, between a man and his sister, and leaving behind it, after each sojourn and after each visit, a sense of void and of vacuity, bitterly disappointing to the home-heart that was yearning for confidence, yearning for reality, yearning for help, to be received and to be given, in the anxious critical journey (as it is felt, on that side, to be) from birth to death, from earth to heaven.

The result of these things is, in various shapes and forms, that evil thing which the Elijah mission comes to repair—alienation or estrangement between the heart of the parent and the heart of the son.

(1) Often it is, as I have described it, a careless

estrangement. There is no motive in it, no reason for it, no avowal, perhaps no consciousness, of it—it is what might easily have been avoided, it is what might possibly be removed, were there but just the thing, which, alas, is the thing wanting, an earnest purpose, a conscientious resolve. Meanwhile, all is playing, trifling, jesting. Nothing is called by its own name. The very relationship itself has a nickname—for which we plead that it means nothing, when, unhappily, that is the very worst of pleas, making into an excuse the very purposelessness which is the crime.

(2) Now and then, not quite rarely, it is a religious estrangement. The son has taken up opinions, which are not those of the home, on subjects of sacred import. He may be right in so doing. That is, he may be convinced in heart and soul of the truth of something different from the system of doctrine or ritual in which he was brought up. He may have given much time, large reading, deep thought, earnest prayer, to the discovery of the thing which God has spoken. He cannot help the result—it is his life. Then arises the practical question. This new doctrine is not the doctrine of the home: the home dislikes, protests against, will have none of it. Unwise arguments, injudicious entreaties, overbearing commands, are heaped upon him. Much and sorely against his will, alienation is forced upon him. It is not his doing: he tried all gentle methods, and they were in vain. But how often is it otherwise. There was no modesty in the manner, there was no humility in the language, there was no reluctance (there ought to have been) to differ, there was no moderation in the carrying out of the new, there was

no show of regret in the abandonment of the old. The alienation is a religious alienation—but it need not have been: he might have avoided it, without cowardice and without compromise.

(3) Far, far more often the estrangement is the direct opposite of this. It is not a religious, it is a sinful alienation. By some one of the thousand wiles or assaults of evil the son has been led astray from the God of his father. He has that in his bosom which cannot dwell in the home: if it does, it must first disguise itself. A guilty secret is there, such as innocent sisters could not hear of and live. A deep sense of hollowness, a burning wound of shame, makes it torture to be as he is where he is. A distance wide as the poles asunder severs him from days when home could be home to him. The habit of dissimulation grows. At last he is a stranger amongst next friends. The heart of the son is alienated from the father—where is the Elijah that shall turn it back again?

We ought to be able to answer that question. There is a balm in Gilead for all sorrows—may there but be the Physician, the divine Physician, to apply it. But first we must say a word or two as to what home is—in God's intention, and in the experience of His children.

(1) Home is our haven. In early years it is a place of safe-keeping. What should we have been without that safeguard? Have we ever stopped to commiserate and to feel for the homeless? Those poor children, baptized in tears, who never had a home—how must it be with them? No sweet memories were theirs, of gentle nurture, of kind smiles and loving words, of the presence

of good and the absence of evil—can we wonder that they fell into bad ways and vile habits? What was there to warn them off from them? What was there to win them another way? What was there so much as to distinguish for them between good and evil? God's holy ordinance, above and before all services or sacraments, of a tender and loving home, this was wanting to them—and with it all that 'preventing with the blessings of goodness' of which a psalmist tells, and of which we, the worst of us, have all had experience.

But that which home was to us in the infancy and in the childhood, that it still is or still might be to us, whether as the permanent residence or in the occasional return.

Where is the young man who does not owe much, who might not owe much more, to his holidays from school, to his vacations from college? How much did we feel in our own past days for those Indian or Australian public-school boys who had no home to go to in the intervals of school-times. What a perceptible lack was there for them of the blessed influences of the holidays. Premature citizens of the world, they were made playthings of, they were made guests of, they were made men of—they were tolerated, or they were caressed, or they were flattered—they were not and they could not be, in those intervals, recruited and repaired and restored by the holy influences of a home.

With us it is otherwise. When we return home, we shake off the surroundings and the encumbrances of a factitious existence, and go back into all the naturalness

and all the reality of the rock from which we were hewn. 'For a few short weeks,' said a voice silent now for almost forty years, 'this fatal spell will now be taken off from you, and you will live and breathe in freedom.' O the reparative and the restorative influence, as it might be, of those few short weeks! Repent of your neglect of them: use them hereafter, if God spares you, to the full.

(2) Home is our confessional. Yes, before there was altar or shrine, ministry or priesthood, home was. The father of the household was its priest. God modelled upon that exemplar all priesthood that was ever His institution. Priesthood itself replaced not the home—still less that Christian ministry which leaves all Christians priests. How many soever be the presbyters of the church of England, still the confessional, as God ordained it, is the home. Thither carry your secrets—there unbosom, and there leave them. Absolution is of God only—'who can forgive sins but God alone?' I speak of the human instrumentality—and I say that for one man whose best confessor is the clergyman, for a hundred and a thousand men the best, the alone safe confessor is in his home.

Yes, in the home. Many a secret which there is danger, moral danger, spiritual danger in divulging in a vestry or a chancel may be confided with nothing but advantage to a brother, to a father—best of all, to a mother. Fear not the not being understood—fear not the being abhorred—fear not the being indelicate, or the doing harm. The purest of Christian matrons knows something of the evil that is in the world—she can understand you. The purest of Christian matrons is a

mother too—fear not lest her love should spurn from her, for his sin, the son of her womb. A word, a half-word, will tell all that she need know: unspoken, unspeakable, will be the comfort, the relief, the emancipation, for you. Of all the terrors of a mother concealment is the most terrible. Confidence given will be joy more than grief, even if it should tell of the most heinous sin that man is capable of. Then, if there be but the honest heart—and without it there would not be the confession—infinite will be the help in regaining the right way, from the knowledge that a mother sympathizes, a mother counsels, and a mother prays.

(3) Yet one word more. Home is our friend. Very delightful is other friendship: ask not of me any depreciation of it. 'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' The mere fact that I have chosen him partly proves and partly ensures the congeniality and the sympathy. But yet I say it—home is *the* friend. It is the dear ones of birth and nature who will go through the life with us. Friends may be severed, beyond the reach of voice or sign: friends may form their own new ties, or their own life-tie, and be partially lost to us. The home and its belongings change not. We go back to them, as to our own, after the longest separations, after the widest wanderings. Hold fast by your home. Even its relics and fragments are precious. Even upon the 'broken pieces of that ship' we can 'escape safe to land.' Nothing is like it. Cling to it. It is your life.

It has been the object of this plain common sermon to hold up to your thankful contemplation the privileges and responsibilities of your home relationships. I shrink

not from very humble particulars. I press upon you the duty and the blessing of a constant correspondence by letter with your homes. The old-fashioned Sunday letter is a great institution alike of nature and grace. Give time to it. Keep nothing back. You give infinite pleasure. You clear and cleanse your life by it. You keep the door open by it between you and your haven, between you and your confessional, between you and your friend. Everything that Sunday ought to be harmonizes and sympathizes entirely with this use of it. It is not instead of worshipping, nor instead of hearing sermons, nor instead of happy converse with God and man—but it is a good sequel and corollary to all these. I make it a sample of your use of the home relationship as a whole.

I must add yet three concluding words.

(1) First, remember the home relations of others besides yourself. Let the thought make you sympathetic. Towards those beneath you in station, servants and tradesmen, let it teach you consideration. Take pleasure in entering into their home feelings. Those, more especially, who have left homes of their own to serve you, how desirous should you be to help them in remembering their own—to rejoice in their home joys and to weep with their home sorrows. Still more, let the thought make you doubly watchful against drawing others into sin. Do not, in wantonness or in selfishness, involve another, beside or beneath you, in that miserable alienation from home which we have spoken of as the certain consequence of sinning. The poorest has a home, however homely: the woman which is a sinner had a home once: be not you instrumental in adding

one lock or one bar to that home, if it be now shut behind her.

(2) Secondly, beware of so treating your own home in the present as that it shall be the bitterest memory to you in a day that shall be. If you knew what it is to be what the psalmist speaks of as 'a man that mourneth for his mother,' you would dread above all things the having to feel in that season of heaviness that by omission or commission of yours you ever made that mother's heart to ache for you. While yet there is time, for most of you, think of that last end, and treasure not up unto yourselves sorrow in the cloudy and dark day.

(3) My last word of all is spoken to a few in this congregation, who, like us older men, have already passed through that saddest and sorest of experiences—the loss of one or of both their parents. Does that, think you, end the relationship? God forbid. It does but seal and crown and immortalize it. The fifth commandment has still its echo for you. 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' and not only so—for this might be but the remembrance of an irreparable past—but, in the view of an available future also, 'incline our hearts to keep this law.' Yes, we have still to honour the father and the mother departed. We have still to speak reverently and thankfully of them, and nothing ever that is not such. We have still to feel them near us in our going out and coming in. We have still to give thanks for them in the prayer for the church militant. I do not say that we can pray for them—and yet I do feel that God will not cast out the prayer which asks not indeed for a reversal of their condition

(God grant they need it not) but for His holy keeping, for His sweet presence with them, for His continued and continual advancement of them in all joy and in all knowledge. Nothing is less Christian than the relegation of the departed into an unapproachable land of shadows where no loving thought, no tender sympathy, no real and realized communion, can any more reach them. Let your 'home relations' take in the dead. This shall give sweetness to your prayers, reality to your hopes, and sanctity to your conduct towards the living. 'Always to be praised, as well for the dead as for them that are alive'—such is our description of God Himself in our commemoration of the world's benefactors: and for ourselves no benefactors can be equal to those who have been dear and loving to us while they lived, and have guided us by their example towards that everlasting home where they are now safe and at rest till the day of Christ's coming.

XXVII.

NECESSITY AND UNMARVELLOUSNESS OF THE NEW BIRTH.

St John iii. 7.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

TRINITY Sunday is no festival of theologians or mystics—it is the festival of revelation and of the Christian life. It gathers into one all the several particulars of fact and truth which have been the subject, one by one, of their own feast days and fast days through the first half of the church's year: it summons us to their contemplation as a whole, and it bids us to apply that sum and substance of divine revelation to the heart's heart and to the life's life of which God has given it to be at once the sustaining food and the healing medicine.

I know not by what other choice of a gospel for Trinity Sunday the church could more strongly have marked the practical character or the individual bearing of the revelation which it enshrines.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus—and he came to Jesus with a partial recognition of His person and office. He came by night—a ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin, could scarcely come by day and return into the religious world of that time

as its accepted and honoured Rabbi. He came with courtesy and with deference—yet there is something of superiority and even of patronage in the tone: 'we know that thou art come from God as a teacher'—we do thee that honour, we who are ourselves qualified and constituted to judge. He came with a large admission—and yet it is very far indeed from the confession either of Messiahship or of divinity. We scarcely possess the materials for estimating decidedly the position of Nicodemus at that moment towards the humble and youthful Person whom yet he already addressed as a Rabbi—for Jesus, instead of replying directly to the great man's compliment, and counting it a gain (as many in these days would have us to do) that He is acknowledged as at least one part of that which He is, meets him on the threshold with an abrupt, an uncompromising, an almost repellent saying, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He saw in this visitor not only (for that He sees in all men) a soul worth saving, but also a character full of hope, may but the self-importance be humbled and the worldliness purged away by his being made to feel that the teacher come from God has a personal message for him, and by his being brought to his very knees to hearken what the Lord God has to say concerning him.

It is thus that our Lord always begins His real work in those whom He came to save. To the woman of Samaria, trying to turn the conversation into a theological controversy as to the Jewish and the Samaritan conceptions and localizations of worship, He suddenly reveals the practical bearing of all His dealings in grace

by the humbling and life-searching mandate, 'Go, call thy husband—and (with him) come back hither.' Upon the rich young ruler, so pleasing, so moral, so open-minded, yet withal so self-complacent, He flashes the light of a first self-revelation in the words, 'If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and then follow' the homeless one, the despised and rejected and crucified. Just so it is here. This 'Master of Israel' has come to mete out modified praise, to yield a stinted and qualified homage, to his Maker, Redeemer, and Judge—and he finds himself confronted with a word not written in his theology, staggering alike to his dignity and to his self-satisfaction, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' He came to discuss, to dispute, to argue, to judge: he is sent away to lay afresh the very foundations of his innocent life—to be born again, born from above, born of water and of the Spirit. And when he would plead not only the novelty or the mysteriousness, but the impossibility, of the thing prescribed to him, he is charged with a want of information and of intelligence in his own professed calling—'Art thou a master of Israel, and (even without my telling thee) knowest not these things?'

It is interesting to be taught by later pages of this gospel that this method of dealing was (if we may venture the expression) justified by the event. Nicodemus, the visitor by night (as St John at least once again calls him) had the courage at a later stage in the history to speak a word for Jesus amidst the condemning voices of the Sanhedrin—'Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?'—and

after the crucifixion, when fear and shame might have conspired to daunt him, to join with another secret disciple in doing honour to the lifeless body in its brief tenancy of the rich man's tomb.

But now we shall leave the particular occasion—the night-visit, and the character and later history of Nicodemus—and make the brief words, standing by themselves, our text on this crowning festival of the gospel, 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' The saying was for Nicodemus, yet the singular changes into the plural in the very uttering: 'I said unto *thee*'—but what I say unto thee, I say unto all—'*Ye*,' not thou only, 'must be born again.'

The text has evidently two parts: first, the necessity—and yet, secondly, the unmarvellousness—of the new birth.

1. 'Ye must be born again.'

Nicodemus took the words literally, and might well ask, 'How can a man be born, when he is old?' *We* know that the new birth is a metaphor, and are in more danger of regarding it as an experience but too facile and obvious—a thing of external ordinance and ceremonial propriety, which being once done for us or done over us in days of unconsciousness and infancy, may thenceforth be taken for granted or let alone as to any demand made by it or any consequence to be realized in ourselves.

The new birth is a metaphor, capable, as such, of many applications. Cicero called his return from exile a *παλιγγενεσία*. Jewish Rabbis called by the same name the incorporation of a proselyte. Any extraordinary change from a state of disadvantage or of adversity

into its opposite might be described by ourselves (if the passage before us had not made such uses of the figure irreverent) as a regeneration or new birth. Our Lord Himself actually speaks of that mighty transfiguration which shall accompany His advent as 'the regeneration when the Son of Man shall take His seat on the throne of His glory.'

It is no irreverence, but the simplest recognition of a spiritual reality, which applies the term regeneration to the sacrament of Christian baptism. It is a change, not of name or form, not of hypothesis or peradventure, but of vital significance, which comes over the 'infant of days' brought to the font and laver of baptism, to be given into the charge and care of Jesus Christ for life and for death, in obedience to His own parting injunction, and on the express ground of His death for atonement and of His life for justification. In that ordinance every promise of God to mankind is sealed upon the individual. As reason expands, as life developes, as passion awakens, as temptation thickens, grace is guaranteed sufficient for the day. An education complete in all its parts, bodily, mental, spiritual, has become the right of that life. Beside that font God has said to His church, 'Take this child and train him for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' A change, real and significant, has passed over that cradle. A regeneration beyond any human surprise of fortune, beyond any inheritance of earthly wealth or title, has been given, without money and without price, to that helpless, that unconscious babe. And it would be a confusion of terms, neither reasonable nor Christian, ever afterwards to apply the particular word 'regeneration' to any spiritual

transformation, however sudden or however durable, which may pass over that human being in his onward course through the manifold vicissitudes of mortal existence towards the resurrection of the dead whether just or unjust.

And yet, brethren—I pause to ask myself—was this regeneration by baptism the very thing, and the whole of that thing, of which our Lord said in this memorable nightly interview, 'Ye must be born again?' Was it that Nicodemus, some months or years hence, when the doors of the new kingdom should be set open by Pentecost, must apply for that 'washing of water' which till then must be of necessity an unmeaning and blank name to him? Was there not something for him to carry away in his heart that evening, full of instant and urgent, of practical because spiritual significance?

And if we, living eighteen centuries after that great day of Pentecost, have been all subjected, in unconscious infancy, by the charitable work of others, to that washing with the lustral and consecrated water which has become the condition—and we would thank God for it—of this our English society and citizenship, shall we say that therefore there remains nothing to be done in us or by us to fulfil that momentous, that critical precept, 'Ye must be born again?'

Brethren, we cannot so read the words of our Saviour, whether we think of Him or of ourselves—of the reason given for the necessity spoken of, or of our experience of that want which only reality can satisfy.

Here, if anywhere, we must speak heart to heart and spirit to spirit—yearning, and even travailing in pain, over the invisible future of lives so precious as these

to their homes, to their country, to their church, and to their God—and we could not justify it to our ourselves if we failed to carry the enquiry before us into a sphere higher and deeper even than ordinance or sacrament, asking quite simply, quite as of those who know and can answer, Has that change taken place in you—for change it certainly is from that which is natural to the fallen—which introduces a man into a life within, above, and beyond this life; a life in which things and persons unseen and eternal are real, are interesting, are attractive; in which he is conscious of existences that can neither be touched nor grasped nor handled, but which yet are a thousand times more true and more substantial than the shapes and forms and relationships amongst which he here on earth lives and moves and has his being?

We must not put the enquiry from us, as though it applied only to persons standing, like Nicodemus himself, outside the pale of Christianity and of the church. If in deed and in truth we are what Scripture calls 'new creatures in Christ Jesus,' then we may give great thanks to Him who, by such means as pleased Him—and we need scarcely ask by what means—has given us His unspeakable gift, and with it the meetness of which St Paul speaks for the inheritance of the saints in light. But if it is our case—and we can all judge of it—that we have no real interest in anything higher than the anxieties, ambitions, and affections of this present world; if, when we would pray, we find God Himself as distant and as unreal as any most visionary, most imaginary idea which flits across our dreaming or roving thoughts; if the work of Jesus Christ is mere doctrine

to us, and the prospect of death and of the life after death never influences one single thing that we think or say or do—then it would be mere self-deception to think that we have undergone the change spoken of in those solemn warning words to Nicodemus, expressly extended by Christ Himself to all successive generations of the living, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

There are men, not to be counted by thousands or tens of thousands, whose lives are tossed to and fro, from youth to old age, on a sea of misgiving and perplexity by reason of this one want, of a real new birth. How they stand towards God Himself, towards life and death, things present and things to come, there is no voice to tell them—earth and heaven are silent. Whether they have any right to pray or to worship; any right to the very bread they eat or the raiment they put on; any right to work or to enjoy, to perform one duty or to fill one relation or to do one act or utter one word of charity, in this absolute void and chaos of the spiritual being—this troubles them when they think of it, and the thought sometimes is forced upon them. It is in these days of the youth, of the education and training for maturity, that such thoughts are commonly busiest. Later on, they will gradually vex themselves into a troubled and broken repose: concerns of the passing hour will assert the first place and claim the immediate attention: the ambiguity of the spiritual standing will be carried about with the man to his work and to his amusement, but it will be as a dull rather than as an acute sensation, and he will learn to make it suspend itself while he reads

and visits, laughs and talks, sleeps his sleep or takes his journey. None the less is the void there, though he has schooled himself to bear with or to acquiesce in it.

Even the minister of holy things has not in every case settled with himself this first question. He runs, but he is not quite sure who sent him: he runs, but he has not quite for certain his tidings ready. Hence many a vacillation of speech and conduct—hence many an uncertain sound, many a faltering step, and many a race hindered.

O, brethren, might we but settle this preliminary while we are young! It is this terrible misgiving about the new birth, which gives advantage to folly and fanaticism in lulling it. It is because we are not sure of our standing, that we are so thankful to any one who will settle it for us anyhow. A sudden flash of light out of darkness—a momentary glimpse of things high above—a passing impression—'something has occurred within me—I am converted—I am changed—I am saved'—and yet, look again, or look tomorrow, 'I am where I was and what I was—there is nothing'—all this excitement, all this illusion, derives its force and its strength from the longing of which we have spoken for a standing place and therefore for a starting point—for something which shall say to me, Thou art born again, live from henceforth the regenerate life.

O that the voice which speaks to the soul might say to one of us, Christ died for the whole world, and therefore for thee—God sent the gospel into England, and so called thee—God caused thee to be born in a Christian home, and so to be brought to holy baptism, and then and there He sealed upon thee every promise and every

possession of His children, made thee a member of Christ, made thee the child of God, said to thee, Go forth and be so—everything that the saint of God hath is thine: thou hast a right to pray, a right to the Spirit, and a right to glory.

2. It may be well now to look for a few moments at the other half of the text, that which sets before us, side by side with the necessity, what we have called the unmarvellousness, of the new birth.

We might have expected our Lord to speak of it as a marvel above all marvels, that a child of flesh and of the fall should become a child of grace and of the Spirit. But He says, 'Marvel not.' Some very bright and encouraging thoughts lie in that word.

(1) And the first of these is, the reality of the want. The new birth is an urgent necessity. In that necessity, in that urgency, lies hope, for all who have not schooled themselves into the saying, There is no God.

The reality of the want. Brethren, I cannot imagine a reproach so harsh, so cruel, as that which should declare the dullest, the most insensate of us all to be satisfied as he is—in other words, to acquiesce in his state by nature. What is that state? Our Lord says, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh.' We know indeed that the word 'flesh' in Scripture means much more than 'body.' St Paul enumerates 'the works of the flesh,' and he includes among them many actions and many qualities which have little or nothing to do with the body. Elsewhere he even speaks of the mind of the flesh, and says that to have it is death. Indeed there is no part of the natural life which does not fall in Scripture under the category of the flesh. Not only the

luxuries and the amusements of this life—not only the ambitions which have their scope in this present—but even the affections which find their object on earth, and even the intellectual pursuits which call out the energies of so many—however little they may seem to be concerned with the body, are yet all, I believe, included under the term 'flesh' when our Lord and His apostles use that term as the opposite of 'spirit.'

Now, when we have given it this largest scope and compass, is there any one who will declare from his own experience that this life of flesh leaves no want, or only a slight and subordinate want, unsupplied? Ask the youthful student—ask the brilliant winner of every prize and every scholarship of his University—ask the professional man, who has risen step by step to the first place among his rivals—ask the successful lawyer, ask the eminent physician, ask the talented artist, ask the powerful statesman, is he satisfied? is there no empty place in his life and in his heart—yes, even if you give him also, what certainly comes not to all, peace at home, health and happiness in the dwelling, 'much good laid up for many years' in the bright hopes and early triumphs of his children? Still is there not a void? If it were nothing more than the grim form of death always in front of him, would not this be enough to forbid contentment in that which (even in this widest sense) is 'born of the flesh?'

But how if we bring in the further thought—say but as a possibility or a peradventure—of a state and a being into which the putting off of this body may usher us? If there be a life after death—and most of us count this to be either a self-evident or at least a

well-evidenced certainty—can we so much as dream that that life can be safely entered upon by anything which, however beautiful or however powerful, is, at last and at its best, born of the flesh? We must know that of 'that world,' as our Lord wonderfully terms it, we have no information, nothing whatever beyond the wildest guessing, save in the gospel of His word and of His resurrection. It is easy, I know, to dream of a paradise which shall be in all respects this earth over again with the single exception of its pains and sorrows, its circumscriptions, decays, and deaths. But this is mere dreaming, and we know it. If we look at the only descriptions of that world which the gospel of Christ gives us; if we read the three immortal chapters which contain the consolations of the last supper; if we read the closing chapters of the whole Book, which contain the very latest utterances of the Spirit to the churches—we must see that one thread of thought runs through all, and that is the absorbing, the satisfying presence of a Person, not visible to the eye of flesh, whom to know, whom to love, whom to adore, whose name to have in the forehead, whose glory to feel and to feast upon and to bask in, is the very life itself of such as shall be counted worthy to attain that manifested perfection of being.

The want therefore which made itself felt below in the form of a void and an unsatisfaction is in the prospect of that other existence a want amounting to destitution, a want which names itself in the Bible as 'the second death.'

But now, if all this be so, if this want of the new birth to give us happiness here, to make us capable

of existence there, is thus urgent and thus imperative, ought it very much to surprise us, ought it to be a wonder above all wonders, if God has provided some better thing, something lying altogether outside flesh, for those whom He has thought it worth while to create, and, when they had sinned, still to continue in being? This want, which flesh cannot fill, is it a marvel beyond acceptance if God interposes to satisfy? If we could not have ventured to anticipate such an intervention, still can we not hail it, when revealed, as altogether worthy of its Author? If the Saviour stands upon this earth and proclaims to us a regeneration—a new birth of water and fire, of a purifying and an enkindling Spirit—ought it at any rate to arouse in us by its mere marvellousness mistrust or incredulity? Does it not strike us, on reflection, as being of one piece and one colour with what, even in the far land of our truancy and of our exile, our heart's heart tells us of the home from which we have strayed, and of the Father, forsaken but not forgotten, who dwells there?

'Marvel not,' our Lord says to us—marvel not, ye who feel earth empty while it is earth only—marvel not, ye who believe in God, and mean by that name a God not dead but living—if the very want of which you are conscious is a reason for its being supplied—supplied, as alone it can be, by a new birth offered you into a world not of flesh but of spirit.

(2) But our Lord suggests a second reason for His 'Marvel not.' He bids Nicodemus to recognize in some of the commonest workings of nature the very analogy and parable of the new birth. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, though

thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth—so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

Each element contributes to the pages of Scripture an illustration of the power and office, the energy and operation, of the Holy Ghost. 'Water and the Spirit' is one of these—it tells of cleansing and of refreshing. 'The Holy Ghost and fire' is another of these—it speaks of warming and cheering, of enlightening and enkindling. 'The wind bloweth...and so is the Spirit'—wind, in Greek and Latin and Hebrew, is the very name of the Spirit: we scarcely know, in the words now touched upon, whether to read, 'The wind bloweth,' or (with the margin of the Revised Version) 'the Spirit breatheth'—so entirely is the metaphor of the wind, with its freshening and reviving and health-bringing influences, the very embodiment of the Spirit's office in the region of grace and salvation.

Who shall say, our Lord asks Nicodemus, that it is any argument against one of nature's forces, that there is no tracing it in its course and no discerning it in its working? Who shall contradict alike common speech and common reason by declaring that the wind is not because he cannot see it? 'Thou hearest the sound thereof'—it is enough. The wind rustles and whistles without, when your curtains are drawn for the evening—will you say, There is no wind blowing, because you have shut it out, and, if you had not shut it out, would have seen nothing? You rise in the morning to find your lawn strewn with shrivelled leaves and your shrubbery with torn branches—shall you pretend to be ignorant what has done it, because you were asleep when it was done, and, if you had been waking, yet

would have seen nothing? 'So is every one that is born of the Spirit.' Thou hearest the sound—thou seest the consequence, in altered speech and purified feeling and reformed conduct—'marvel not' if the working was secret—it cannot be more secret or more inscrutable than is nature herself in operations which none but fools or madmen can gainsay.

That unmarvellousness of the new birth which our Lord illustrates from what we call external nature might be argued under His guidance from mental phenomena. Who pretends to be ignorant of the power of influence, as we see it exercised every day by man upon man, in forming his judgment, moulding his character, and guiding his conduct? Account for it as you may, the mere accident (as we speak) of being brought into companionship, for a short period of the existence, with a being of like feelings and passions as we are, may make all the difference for us between one line and one course of life and another—between the choice of this profession and the choice of that—nay, between a whole career of virtue and happiness and a whole career of misery and vice. We do not see that influence, that flowing in of one mind into another mind, of one man's idea of good and evil, of one man's principle of judging and acting, into another's, so as to affect and alter and at last replace it: yet parents have had to feel it in its consequences as but too real and too powerful, and souls now in Hades are tracing their present joy or their present sorrow to some definite human life once for a time very close to their own, however little deliberate, or however little conscious, while it was so, may have been that gracious or that disastrous

outflowing and inflowing from the one being into the other being.

This most active and powerful factor in human being is the very type and parable of one lower and of one higher. We cannot doubt, we who read the Bible naturally, that there is such a thing as an influence upon the soul from the principalities and powers of darkness. There is a pit of the abyss, Scripture tells us, with its mouth emitting fire and smoke into the atmosphere of the human habitation. But it is with the opposite influence that the text is concerned. That power which the spirit of man has over the brother or sister spirit, by the mere fact of its being of this sort or that, apart from any direct design of influencing for good or for evil, shall we suppose that the Creator Spirit is destitute of for the regeneration and sanctification of the work of His own hands? 'Marvel not' if I speak to you of an agency real and effectual, which you cannot see with your eyes nor hear with your ears nor measure with your reason, but which yet does change hearts and souls into that which by nature they were not, transferring them from a life of flesh into a life of spirit, and opening to them whole fields of thought and action to which but for this supernatural influence they would have lived and died strangers.

(3) Our Lord Himself suggests to us one other reason for His 'Marvel not,' when He goes on to call this new birth with all its eventful consequences an 'earthly' thing in comparison with a 'heavenly.' Just thus does He, in another chapter of this gospel, after describing what we should think the very greatest of miracles the resurrection of dead souls to newness of

life, go on to say, 'Marvel not at this,' wonderful as it must appear to you—there is a greater miracle behind it, and that greater miracle is the resurrection of the body.

'Marvel not,' He says here, at the mystery of the new birth, by water and the Spirit: in comparison with one other mystery it is as an earthly thing beside a heavenly. That other mystery is atonement—the lifting up upon the cross of the Son of Man to be the life of a dead world. Of that other mystery it cannot be said as it can be said of this, that it gives any direct proof of itself by its effects, or that it has any clear parallel in things natural or in things human. The work of the Spirit, like the action of the wind, like the working of influence between man and man, though inscrutable in its operation, is traceable in its consequences. From the sound you infer the action of wind, from the conduct you infer the action of influence, from the effect upon the man himself you infer in like manner the new birth by the Spirit. Of the work of atonement, of the connexion between the death of the Saviour and the forgiveness of sins, you have no such evidence—it is altogether a secret thing, not in itself only, but in its results. It is a revelation pure and simple, to be received only on the word of Jesus Christ, who 'saw' it in the bosom of God, and brought it down with Him from heaven to be the faith of mankind. Marvel not at the work of the Spirit—far more marvellous really is the work of Christ.

Thus the third reason for the unmarvellousness of the new birth—is the greater marvellousness of another

revelation which yet to all Christian people is as real and as certain as the breath they draw. If you can say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' much more can you say, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' how then shall ye believe, if I go on to tell of that greatest secret of all, which yet it were better not to have been born than not to know and to be assured of?

This is not the common estimate, I know, even among Christians, of the less and the greater, of the more and the less mysterious. But is the inversion which we feel to be now prevalent of Christ's estimate of the marvellousness of the two cardinal revelations a sign altogether of good? No man, He seems to say, ought to think the revelation of atonement easier to accept or easier to apprehend than the revelation of regeneration. And certainly no peril can be greater than the easy and confident holding of the one, combined with the slight and tentative grasp of the other. To take the forgiveness of sins almost as a matter of course, involving no difficulty and demanding no effort—while the grace of the Holy Spirit is treated as a mystical and half optional doctrine, not the postulate of being, and not the condition of the life—this is to rob our Lord's argument with Nicodemus of its whole force and cogency, and at the same time to betray a most inadequate conception alike of the nature of sin and of the necessity of sanctification. 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again'—for there is a marvel of marvels behind it, which is the mystery of the propitiation and of the intercession.

Blessed be His holy name, who thus facilitates and thus simplifies His unspeakable gift. That we want it we know, both for this and for that world. That it is conceivable, having even its parables in nature and its similitudes in humanity, we know. That there is one mystery more mysterious still, which yet we all live by, Christ tells us in the context. What shall we say then to these things? Shall we be contented, year after year, to keep the feast of which we partake not, and then to go away to live for another week, and for the week of weeks which is the span of being, the life born of the flesh? Let us not so trifle and play with that truth which must judge us. Let us henceforth pray the prayer, and mean it, Lord, cleanse the thoughts of my heart—Lord, teach me —Lord, enlighten and comfort and quicken me—by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit. When some difficult duty oppresses us, when some special sin wars in our members, when a general languor and deadness makes the Bible distasteful and seals against us the fount of prayer, let us look upward to the place where Christ is, and wait, if we lack words to ask, for the unspeakable gift. When we have but for once tasted it—when we have found but for once, but in faintest feeblest experience, how the hand and the foot, the voice and the pen, are really set in motion by the inspiriting and inspiring Spirit—we shall want no persuasion to ask, to seek, and to knock for Him. To one He may come earlier, more consciously, more abundantly—to another later, more ambiguously, more scantily, as it were more reluctantly: yet to all alike the promise is sure, not won by merit, but pledged by grace, 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts

unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.' Blessed words—having hope in them for the vilest. 'Ask, and ye shall have—' for 'He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.'

XXVIII.

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

St Matthew xiii. 46.

One pearl of great price.

THE difference between this parable and the one next before it in the group of seven has often been dwelt upon. In the one, the man stumbles upon the priceless prize—in the other, he is a seeker first. But with this exception the two parables are alike. The hidden treasure casually discovered, and then again hidden by the finder himself till he can make sure, by purchase, of the field containing, and so of the treasure contained in it—and the costly pearl, found in the search for pearls, and recognized as worth buying at the cost of all that the man has—are but two figures for the same great truth, that there is one thing in comparison with which all else is insignificant, and to gain which no sacrifice is either a waste or an imprudence.

In some cases our Lord Himself has interpreted the details of His parables. The parable of the sower, the parable of the tares, the parable of the net, are explained by Himself, either spontaneously, or in reply to questions of the disciples. We could wish that we had in the same direct form His readings of other riddles. The request, 'Declare unto us the parable of the pearl

of great price' might have drawn from Him a decisive statement, from which there could be no appeal, of the particular point which He designed it to illustrate. In the absence of such an authoritative interpretation, we may read the figure variously, and not materially err in doing so.

It is my purpose this afternoon to make the pearl of great price the soul of the man, and to speak of the inestimable worth of the soul, in its loss and in its finding. In this treatment of the parable we shall have abundant encouragement from Scripture. We shall remember how our Lord Himself speaks of a man 'gaining the whole world and losing his own soul' as the most terrible miscalculation of the true interests which it can come into the mind to conceive. We shall remember His use of the expression, the loss of a man's soul, as made equivalent in the parallel passage of another gospel to the loss of the man himself. We shall remember His alternative, of the two 'souls,' or the two 'lives,' of which the saving of the one is the losing of the other. We shall remember how He speaks elsewhere of the gaining of the soul as a thing still future for any. 'In your patience ye shall gain your souls,' is His encouragement to a life of Christian endurance. 'Who shall give you that which shall be your own?' is His appeal in behalf of a life of Christian fidelity in the use of that substance (of whatever kind) in this world, which for its precariousness and its fugitiveness is, even while it lasts, rather another's than ours, in contrast with that one thing which whosoever hath shall have it inalienably and for ever. Even in passages of Scripture where the authorized version has

overlooked or obscured the difference, it will be found on examination that the same idea lurks in the original. 'We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the gaining of the soul.'

When we read the parable before us by the light of these revelations, we shall have before us a graphic description of the most momentous event which can occur to any man. There is a search for goodly pearls which is characteristic of all who live otherwise than as the beasts that perish. Define it as you may, every man who is not utterly besotted or utterly trifling is a seeker for something which he has not. He may have the vaguest of notions what that something is. When we interpret his search, we may call it a search, conscious or half-conscious, for happiness, for satisfaction, for that which shall give play to every latent energy or rest to every roving affection. Generation after generation has been engaged in this search: youth and age, wealth and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, each in its own way, till it attains or till it despairs, is seeking goodly pearls; not all one pearl—yet all with one hope, that the object of pursuit, whatever it be, may be found, and may be found satisfying.

In the midst of these multitudinous, these innumerable seekers, there is one who lights upon a pearl indeed of great price. His own soul is revealed to him. He discovers the reality and the capacity and the awfulness of that personal being which before he had taken for granted, or had treated as made for time, as having its scope and its career in things seen and temporal, or had merely wondered at as curiously and mysteriously constituted, but which now he begins to realize as not

an existence only but a responsibility, as having a relationship, a manifold relationship, Godward and manward, as having been definitely made for God, redeemed by God, and to God to return. Having found this one pearl of great price, he will sell all that he has to buy it. The finding is not all at once the gaining. The discovery of the soul is the first thing —the indispensable preliminary to the making it his own. Having found, he goes, that he may sell and that he may buy—part with everything, and purchase this.

It will be seen therefore that the reading of the pearl of great price as the human soul involves no real discrepancy with other interpretations which may make it point to the life of God or the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. They are but different aspects of the one great subject; and at the very base of all lies the mighty truth and the mighty fact which is our thesis to-day—The worth of the soul.

It cannot be denied that disparaging things have come to be said of the phrase and of the idea. The worth of the soul is an expression somewhat trite and hackneyed. It has been obtruded upon impatient ears, it has been made the watchword of a religious party, it has been associated with narrow and feeble views, till at last you hear men speaking almost with irritation of the very thing itself—saying, or half saying, What is the soul? talk to me of the man, and I can understand you—the soul is, for me, either an unmeaning or a somewhat misleading phrase.

There are excuses for this impatience. The commission as our Lord gave it, 'From henceforth thou shalt catch *men*,' has too often been lost sight of

in a far more partial and less practical effort to lay hold of one fragment of the man, just a feeling or an emotion, a regret or a resolution, a fear or an aspiration, and then count all done; to attract one portion of the man to one item of the Saviour's work or one note of the Saviour's call, and neglect or disparage every other, effacing all that is most robust and most thorough and most practical, alike in the man who hears and in the Person who speaks with him. We can excuse the feeling which resents this 'limiting of the Holy One,' this dwarfing down of the gospel, this exclusion of the body and of the mind from the reach and touch of the consecrating oil, this parcelling out of the unit being till the very unity is lost sight of, till the spiritual part is divorced alike from the understanding which thinks and the reason which judges and the very life which acts, and God Himself is represented as having created in vain all but one tiny element of the complex creature which He is said to will to save.

But all this, though it may account for some distaste and even disgust for the abuse of the phrase, does not disprove the frequency of its use in Scripture, nor make it less necessary to clear that use from unscriptural associations.

The soul is the man—the personal being—the life-centre—the 'I myself I.' It may be lifted up, or it may be dragged down, absolutely without limit, according as flesh or spirit prevail in its influencing. To save the soul is to decide the alternative one way: to lose the soul is to decide the alternative the other way: the man is saved, or the man is lost, and the magnitude of this ruin or of this salvation is the

measure of the worth of the soul which is its subject.

Brethren, if we would know any peace from a deep-lying and wide-spreading infidelity, it must be by a firm and tenacious hold upon the priceless worth of the soul. Often must the misgiving have presented itself to any one who is capable of rational thought, Can it be that heaven and earth, space and time, Creator and Judge, have suspended common rules and laws of action and consequence in order to rescue out of a self-made ruin the insignificant atom which is the life's life of an individual human being? In the face of disclosures daily made by telescope and microscope, by patient observation and diligent search, of durations and magnitudes, of complications and intricacies of orderly working, such as once entered not into the heart of man to conceive, does it not become more and more improbable that this tiny planet, this feeble and short-lived race, should have occupied such a space in the divine attention as is implied in the terms, and in the very definition of the terms, incarnation and redemption, atonement and justification, sanctification and salvation? We repel these doubts, we treat them as temptations, we hold on our way repeating the old formulas, we bandy the words scepticism and atheism as charms against the being quite overborne and silenced by the antagonism of our own intellects; but there is a feeling of miserable uncertainty all the time, and the loudest tones of confident assertion are sometimes the half-conscious witnesses to the unappeasable discomfort and dissatisfaction within.

Now there can be no question that such misgivings

as these would be diminished almost to vanishing by such an impression of the intrinsic worth of the soul, that is, of the spiritual and immortal man, as carried Paul and his comrades, and all who have shared his faith and his devotion in later ages of the church, through a life of unresting effort to the goal of a pilgrim's or martyr's death. If the soul is indeed not only one curious and wonderful thing among many, but the pearl of great price—the peculiar, the unique marvel and mystery which such expressions as the being created in God's image, after God's likeness, make it—expressions which no sane person would apply to sun, moon, or stars, to any system, or combination of systems, of matter, however stupendous or however glorious—then indeed we can still every misgiving, we can turn it into awe and adoration on the instant, as to any amount whatsoever of divine effort or even of divine sacrifice in the preservation of this soul in its uprightness, or in the restoration of this soul (if need so require) from its ruin.

Some things might be asserted of the uniqueness of the human soul, which would break down on examination. We have to guard against our own ignorance on the one side, and our own vanity on the other, in estimating our exact position, our relative importance certainly, amongst other existences and other creations. Some things might be spoken even of the value of the soul, not according to knowledge, if not against it. We might, for example—many have done so—lay the whole stress of the uniqueness upon the gift of reason. Intelligence, men have said, is the divine image in the one work of God's hand which possesses it. And then we have to beat down the gift of instinct in the inferior

creature, to exalt the human. Yet instinct is a wonderful gift: in its own sphere it rivals, it may even transcend reason. We think indeed that we can see points of difference, which may even go the length of defeating an argument for the immortality of the brute, drawn by parity of reasoning from the immortality of the man. The region within which instinct works, large as it is, seems yet to be bounded by matter. If it enter at all into the realm of the affections, still it may be confined within the limits of flesh and blood; and where the deity of the animal is at best the human, the grave may be the natural terminus even of a devotion marvellously self-forgetting. Others have thrown the whole weight of the uniqueness upon the cognate gift of speech—or upon the twin gifts, of the mind which reasons and the speech which communicates. Yet even speech, wonderful as it is in its mechanism, more wonderful in its influence, is scarcely to be called the only possible vehicle of mutual intelligence, and may itself hereafter be superseded by some new power, more than telegraphic, more than mesmeric, by which beings that have 'attained that world' may think the thought into the mental ear one of another, and despise as a day of small things the lifetime of earth and sense which had language for its one means of communication whether for purposes of business or for interchange of feelings.

It is otherwise when we turn to the pages of revelation, and seek there the proof of the incomparable worth of the soul. We find it on the first page, we find it on the latest. We find it in that expression already referred to, 'God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' An earlier

day and hour of creative activity have filled earth, air, and water with animal life. Now first it is written, Let one being bear the divine image: in virtue of that divine likeness let that one being have dominion over all other being: 'the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.'

We raise no cry of alarm as to the foundations of faith or hope, or even as to the bulwarks of inspiration and revelation, when we hear of any theory, however startling or however precarious, of the developement of created being by successive processes of evolution. It is evident that there is something of figure—the only question is how much or how little—in an account of creation which speaks of mornings and evenings before there is a sun to divide day from night, or a firmament to divide the waters from the waters. We can allow any number of centuries or millenniums to intervene between the first verse and the following verses of the Bible—between 'In the beginning God created' and 'God said, Let there be light,' or 'God said, Let the earth bring forth grass,' or 'God said, Let us make man.' Two things, two only, are vital to our religion: one of these is, 'God created the heaven and the earth;' the other is, 'God created man in His own image.' Even if the outward form and shape was a developement or an evolution, at least the characteristic and the differentia was a creation pure and simple. It matters little by how many successive steps or at what enormous temporal intervals the original atom grew into the fearful and wonderful thing which we look upon and handle. But it is a matter of life and death to us, of more than this

dying life or this literal death, that there should have been at some point that intervention of God Himself to breathe into the human being that breath, not of mortal or animal but of mental and spiritual life, by which the human is distinguished from the irrational creature, 'the spirit of man that goeth upward' from 'the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth.'

We place here that uniqueness of the soul which makes it the one pearl of great price. Other distinctions may be more or less probable—this one is certain. The λόγος which is reason, and the λόγος which is speech—the mind which can think and know, and the speech which can communicate thought and knowledge—may have its imitations or its approximations in the endowments, in various degrees less and greater, of inferior races of creatures. Capacities of pain and pleasure, physical and mental, may be shared in varying proportion with animal lives which man takes into contact with his own life, and which certainly have the power of reciprocating his affection to the very length of giving life itself in unstinting obedience or inconsolable grief. But when God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,' He certainly spoke of a characteristic with which no inferior creature (at all events) could intermeddle. Not idly or at random was that plural form given to that one divine counsel. We will not indeed argue from that plural form the premature revelation of the divine Trinity. Such arguments sound dry and formal, tending rather to throw doubt upon, than to elucidate, the dogma which they are quoted to confirm. But in that plural form lurks the explanation of the divine ῥῆμα in which it is embedded.

'Let *us* make...in *our* image...after *our* likeness' is the intimation of that divine unfathomable sympathy which is to have its counterpart (with reverence be it spoken) in the human. When our Saviour, in His anticipative high-priestly intercession, uttered those words, before He left the guest-chamber or on His way towards Gethsemane, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me, for Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world'—then He interpreted, where there is the ear to hear Him, the mystery of that plural of the creating, 'In *our* image... after *our* likeness...let *us* make man.' The image was the image of a spiritual sympathy: the likeness was the likeness of a divine love.

Can we wonder, if this be true, that the soul is spoken of as a thing of inestimable, of incomparable worth—differing in kind from any most brilliant, most magnificent, most stupendous work of nature—a thing which to find, which to save, is worth any other loss, any conceivable sacrifice—which to damage, which to spoil, which to lose, is a sin and a crime and a horror to which there is nothing like or equal in the possibilities of being?

If the human soul, alone of all created existences of which we know anything save by faintest glimpse and rumour, has the capacity of knowing and loving and feeling with God, and in closest union with this the capacity of a deep and powerful sympathy with other spiritual beings like itself in this aspect Godward; has not enough been suggested to prepare us for an exceptional dealing with it on the part of God Himself,

even if that exceptional dealing should involve whole courses and systems of divine action to which there is no parallel in other experience?

'One pearl, of great price.' The whole Bible is a commentary upon that text. The Bible is the biography not of a soul but of the soul: the illustrious birth, the beautiful childhood—the terrible fall, the fearful disease—the severe discipline, the partial recovery, the frequent relapse—the astonishing sacrifice, the unspeakable gift, the unwearied patience, the abounding grace—at last the perfect restoration, the glorious transformation, the everlasting home: was it worth while, we stop to ask ourselves, thus to devise and thus to elaborate a work without parallel for a being such as we see in others, such as we feel it in ourselves? And the answer, the only adequate answer, is the story of that birth, of that inbreathing of the breath of life, by which man became, in a sense utterly different from that which would be true of any other material or corporeal being, a living soul. If this human being was so made as to be capable of knowing God and even of resembling God in His sympathy and in His love, then it was worth while to buy it back at any price, to reconstruct it from its ruin at any sacrifice.

We are able, in some measure, ourselves to judge of its value. We can do so in two ways and in two forms. We have ourselves seen what a soul may sink to: we have ourselves seen also its possibilities of rising. We have felt in ourselves the sorrows of which it is capable—sorrows as real as any that flesh and blood is heir to, though they are soul's sorrows giving no account of themselves to the stranger. We have known what re-

morse may be, though the deed of which it is the avenger may have been but the word left unspoken or the prayer left unsaid. We have known what the agony of mere silence may be, though the silence be not the unkindness of a friend, but the delayed or withholden answer of an invisible Comforter. We have known what it is to go and to come, to rise and to rest, to do the daily work and hold the human converse, with a heavy cloud over us, an earth of iron and a heaven of brass, by reason of a conscious severance, or an unrealized intercourse, between the spirit of the man and the God who is its life. If these things were all, would they not give some faint reason for hoping, even against hope, for a divine interposition of which the soul is the subject?

'Fearfully and wonderfully made,' the psalmist says of the bodily fabric of which God was in every part the architect and the artificer. How much more fearful and wonderful the mechanism of the soul. So delicate and so sensitive—so easily deranged and disordered—so instantly responsive to treatment kind or unkind, wise or mischievous—so difficult to repair, so tenacious of evil habit, so rapid in transition from ecstasy to agony, so boundless in prospect, so realistic in retrospect. But, far above all, so mysterious in its relationship to God Himself. Which of all us has had no experience ever, in childhood or boyhood, of a direct speaking and hearing, asking and answering, between himself and the invisible One? Who has never carried some burden to a throne of grace, with results which he could as soon doubt his own existence as ignore? Explain it as he may, he has felt at such times that God has a very peculiar and a very personal interest in this soul's life

of which the experiences are so real, the vicissitudes so critical.

Nor are these personal experiences capable of explanation on a hypothesis of idiosyncracy or of hallucination. The lives of *others* are full of them. The existence of the soul, in its distinctness alike from mind and from matter, is an inference from observation as much as from experience. Spiritual distresses, spiritual comforts, spiritual joys and sorrows, have a reaction upon the very life. If they are illusory, if they are imaginary, altogether and in all persons, then nothing is real but what can be touched, tasted, and handled. History itself is not only affected but made by them. Spiritual experiences created a Christendom: spiritual experiences have made, unmade, and remade empires. Homes are made deserts or made paradises by the reaction upon them of prayer refrained from or of prayer lived in. Angels ascending and descending have cheered the dwelling of poverty, and made the bed of sickness the very life-centre and joy-centre of the home. On the other hand, the soul which will none of God—which keeps its doors locked and barred about it while the Saviour stands, all the day long, without, knocking—bewrays its unnatural state by becoming the very cage of unclean birds, or, if not this, at least the perpetual check and hindrance of all high and heavenly aspirations, either making this life the all in all of the being, or discouraging the realization of another by the gloomy suggestions of a practical atheism.

This being which has in it such possibilities, such alternatives, of good and evil—this being which can be so wretched, which can be so mischievous, which can

be so lost—O, it is not insignificant, tell me not that it is insignificant, in the eyes of its Maker. When I confine my thought to the evil—when I see how potent, even in its ruin, is 'the spirit of the man which is in him'—I can begin to understand why God Himself who made should think it worth while to redeem—I can count it no incredible though it be an ineffable grace, if God Himself should have come after this lost thing into the wilderness of its solitude and its despair.

But when I turn my thought to the good from the evil; when, in some beautiful example brought within my vision, I see what the soul may be, not in its ruin but in its reconstruction; when I see some grand life, in cottage or palace, given wholly to God and His work—utterly forgetful of self, whether in the form of indulgence or of glorying—beautiful first at home, bearing slight and discomfort, diffusing peace and joy, out of weakness made strong, or in weakness lovely—then perhaps called to let its light shine in a larger house, on a loftier candlestick; when I see what the soul may be, in even glorifying a Father in heaven—then indeed it seems to be already half explained to me why God Himself should have become incarnate to save—for I see here results different in kind from the testimony of suns or stars 'singing as they shine, The hand that made us is divine'—I see here no lustre, no Shechinah, of a visible or material glory—I see the moral and spiritual image of Him who created, I see also in the very sacrifice which bought back this living soul a manifestation, diverse in its very nature from any other, of the trinity of the attributes—God is Light, God is Life, and God is Love.

Many thoughts come to us as we stand once again in this church, so full of memories for some, so full of prospects for others, so full of anxious alternatives for all. The subject chosen has been an elementary but a comprehensive one. It lies at the root of all religion—the worth of the soul. To be possessed with it is to be a religious man: to live it is to be a Christian. It is because we have forgotten it that we have sinned each sin which now haunts or cumbers the memory—each sin against another, each sin against ourselves. O, if we had believed in the worth of the soul, we should never have fallen into that evil habit which has made such havoc of the past. If we had believed in the worth of the soul, we should have regarded the inner being with such reverence, we should so have felt towards its purity, and so have felt towards its integrity, and so have felt towards its responsibility, that we could not have dared to sully it or to profane it or to trifle with it by that year or that month or that day of folly or of prayerlessness or of sinning. If we had believed in the worth of the soul; if we had believed that the inner life of that brother or that sister—I speak now of the brotherhood and the sisterhood not of family alone but of humanity—was a thing of precious, of priceless value, bearing the image and superscription of God Himself—bearing it still, however tarnished or sullied or half-defaced—possessing the endowment, not of reason only or speech, not of will only or influence, but also of accountability and immortality, of boundless capacity for misery or happiness, of boundless capacity also for divine intercourse and divine communion; assuredly we should never have adventured that sug-

gestion or that persuasion, that word or that deed, by which we put God out of sight, and made the idea of sinning powerful, for that soul: we would rather have cut off hand or foot than have any evil dealing with that mysterious being, whose angel (we could almost have guessed without Christ's saying it) must have been at that very moment beholding the face of God in heaven.

This high or this low estimate of the worth of the soul enters into every thing. This it is which makes one life so mean, and another life so noble. This it is which makes one man set before himself a high idea of duty, and another count any sort of living to which taste and temper, inclination and predisposition, prompt him, the natural thing and the sufficient thing and the unavoidable thing for him. This it is, which makes the companionship of one man so helpful, and the companionship of another man so unimproving or so deteriorating. It is not that the one man never smiles, or is always recalling you in so many words to the recollection of the momentous issues of death, judgment and eternity. And it is not that the other man is necessarily offensive in his language to piety or purity, or utters one syllable against the faith once for all delivered. It is only that the sense of the worth of the soul gives to the one an unstudied and unconscious influence over you for good, and the absence of that estimate drags down the whole aim and scope of the other to a level little if at all above that of the man who avows himself an unbeliever.

Brethren, may the subject of this sermon abide with some of you when the preacher is silent or in his grave. May it give a quiet seriousness to this opening term,

to this opening life, for some of you. May it make one or two, here and there, care for each other's souls when they are together. Let the delightful friendships, here as nowhere else cemented and exercised, have no sting in them, when you are parted for life or in death, by reason of your having cared for each other's bodies, or cared for each other's minds, or cared for each other's successes, or cared for each other's affections—and not cared for each other's souls. O, if the shadow, not dark but bright, of a world out of sight but already projecting its powers (as an inspired man writes) upon this present might rest always upon our companionships and upon our solitudes, upon our days and our nights, upon our working hours and resting—blessed would it be for us beyond words, making the whole of being one, and the whole of being the life of God and the light of heaven. 'No man cared for my soul' is the saddest of lamentations—be it yours to know that perfection of love, divine at once and human, of which the realized worth of souls is at once the safeguard and the inspiration, and this consequently the epitaph, when it comes at last to be written—'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they were not divided.'

XXIX.

LIFE THE SERVICE OF A GENERATION.

Acts xiii. 36.

After he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep.

THE text is capable of three different constructions. The authorized version gives it in the form just read to you. 'David, after he had served his own generation by the will (counsel) of God, fell on sleep.' The revised version gives it in another way. 'David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell on sleep.' The margin of the revised version suggests a third arrangement. 'David, after he had served his own generation, by the counsel of God fell on sleep.' Each one of these constructions has something to recommend it. This is not the place or the time for discussing them, and the general lesson is not affected by the question. In all forms of the sentence, we have the threefold thought, of a generation, a service, and a counsel of God concerning it: and whether we say, 'He served his generation by God's counsel, and then fell on sleep;' or whether we say, 'In his generation he served God's counsel, and then fell on sleep;' or whether we say, 'He served his generation, and then by God's

counsel fell on sleep'—it scarcely matters to the main idea, and can but slightly affect the application to ourselves.

The intention of St Paul in thus commenting on a beautiful verse of the psalms, 'Thou shalt not suffer Thine holy One to see corruption,' is to disparage the human writer in comparison with his Son and Lord. When David wrote those words, he wrote that which, literally taken, was not true of himself. He was laid in the grave like other men, and underwent the common doom of dissolution and corruption. Therefore, St Paul argues, over and above that modified sense of the saying in which alone it could be true of any mere man, it must, if it was not to be charged with an exaggeration fatal to its inspiration, have had a meaning, complete and exhaustive, in which it prophesied the resurrection of Christ from a death of which He, the eternal Son, could not be holden.

A contrast is thus presented between one of the greatest of men and the One greater than any. And yet, in the very act of thus throwing David into the shade in comparison with One who was not man only, St Paul writes a lovely epitaph upon the chivalrous king and sweet psalmist of Israel. 'He served his own generation, and then fell on sleep.' There may be longer, more detailed, more laudatory epitaphs—the fashion of the last century covered the walls of our churches with elaborate and fulsome panegyrics, amongst which this short sentence of St Paul's might have seemed scanty and grudging in its meed of praise—but the truer taste and more reverent feeling of our own age will appreciate the more expressive and in reality more

majestic brevity—'He served his generation, and fell on sleep.'

Brethren, the text presents us with two pairs of equivalents. Life is Service—Death is Sleep.

The first thought which comes out to us from the text—read in any one of its three renderings—is the brief yet suggestive saying, Life is Service.

One rendering of the text calls life the service of a generation. Another rendering calls life the service (in one's generation) of God's counsel. But the most ignorant of thinkers, the most hypercritical of scholars, will see no conflict, scarcely a divergence, in this variation. The moment the idea of service has attached itself to the idea of life, enough has been done to preclude any practical uncertainty as to its nature or object. Life—this common, this universal, this taken-for-granted fact, that I live and move and am; this being which I treat as if I had got it, found it, stumbled upon it, for myself; this everyday possession, of time and thought and faculty and action, which is presupposed in every plan and purpose and exercise of the will—to be told that this life is not self-contained, not self-centred, not dominant and not independent, but, on the contrary, that it is a ministry and a service as much as if I were receiving the wages of a hireling or wearing the livery of an employer—is a surprise and a shock at the first hearing, or would be so if it were heard in the heart, heard as a revelation and heard as a call.

Would to God that the saying, 'Life is Service,' might be written by the spirit of grace upon one of these hearts today. What is it which defeats in this place the very purpose for which we are here? What

is it which scatters to the winds, for so many of us, all the instructions of truth and all the counsels of wisdom? What is it which makes the time spent in this University a loss and a waste and a nullity for so many? What lies at the root of all the idleness, all the frivolity, all the self-indulgence, which is to be bewailed afterwards through the long years of vain regretting or toilsome amending which lie for so many between this life and the grave? O, if many answers, and all of them true, might be given to these questions, could one be found more thorough in its explanation than this—That young man had not yet awakened to the thought, 'Life is Service,' and therefore he saw no harm and no shame in so living for this present as if his time and his talents, his body and mind, his soul and spirit, were all his own—his to waste in folly, his (if it so please him) to consume in sin?

Life is made here the synonym of service. 'Having lived' it might be—'having served' it is. 'Having served'—I am willing to stop there, not asking what or whom. Nay, if you even filled my blank with the word 'himself,' I would not complain of it if you will let me interpret. Let 'himself' mean the real self, the whole of the man, not one part only—the mind that thinks, and the heart that loves, the soul that cannot die, and the body that shall rise again—serve even that and it shall be life—a life not to be despised—a life that hath immortality.

But how much better and more beautiful shall be the aposiopesis, if it may suggest, in some sense—I had almost said, in any sense—not self, but another. Let the first thought of 'Life is Service' be the thought of

any one outside me. Let it be the service of father or mother, of brother or sister, of friend by friend. Set before yourself some one, any one, as the object for which you live. Thus it is that many a man, not yet fully alive to his relationship to a Father in heaven, has found force of character, has found relief from utter vagueness or frivolity of living, in setting himself to be the best of sons, the kindest of brothers, within the home of his own flesh and blood. Thus it is that, when other feelings begin to stir in him, the man has already risen to a higher life, has learned at least to be thoughtful and serious and self-controlling, who has become conscious of the powerful influence of a pure first love, lifting him into the region of reverence and into the region of devotion by the help of an intermediate, representative to him of the love which has all love in it. 'Life is Service' is a principle which has all manner of workings—from the narrowest and most circumscribed to the largest and loftiest of human relationships—or through the highest human to the superhuman and the divine.

The text is large enough to hold all these. 'He served his generation.' 'He served the will of God.' 'He served' is the sum of it.

'He served his generation.' The expression is vague till we interpret it. To one of us it may seem a small thing to have the possibilities of the life confined within the limits of a single generation. We may have formed a grander conception of the capabilities of a life—our own, or another's. We may have dreamed of far-reaching consequences to a church or a country, to literature or history, and thus to the world itself, from

the fact that a certain person has lived and moved and had his being upon the face of the earth from which he was taken. And indeed, in one aspect, we do well to take into account, for warning and quickening, the capacities of this fearful and wonderful being; to impress upon ourselves and others the mysterious, the inscrutable influences of conduct, as involving consequences quite without limit, for good or evil, both to the life itself and to other lives surrounding or following. Who shall pretend to say that the service of the generation may not have in it the service of a second or a third or a tenth generation, by reason of the impression made by its elevation, by its purity, by its benevolence, by its wisdom, upon the very ideas and principles of human living?

Nor is even this the whole of the truth. It is given to a few men to leave a memory behind them in the shape of immortal writings, powerfully affecting the thought of whole nations and languages, sometimes starting afresh into a novelty of influence at some great crisis of history, and moulding the taste or the judgment of posterity by a power only strengthened by lapse of time. Such men are necessarily few and far between—*pauci, quos æquus amavit*—but I know not that aught but good could result from the early ambition to be one of them. It has sometimes been made a topic of discussion in prize-exercises and debating societies, whether the hope of posthumous fame is or can be a genuine motive in the minds and imaginations of the living. Men may deceive themselves as to their own aims and impulses; but certainly, if there be such a motive—disjoined altogether from the idea of a conscious and therefore an impossible

realization—then, in proportion to its vitality and in proportion to its purity, it will secure the developement of some of the loftiest faculties of human nature—though it must ever fall short of one motive higher and nobler still, the constraining love of Christ, which alone can unite the whole man in the consistent endeavour to serve the generation, or to serve the race, by representting Him, in word and deed, to the humanity which He died to save.

And assuredly it is in this last direction alone that we shall find the service of the generation too small and too contracted a sphere for the energies and influences of the man. Inspired men—meaning now by inspiration not the imagination and not the genius which has struck out new paths for mind and thought to expatiate, but the breath of God Himself revealing His secrets to the individual soul that it may tell them forth to hearers and readers, and live them in the sight of contemporaries and witnesses—inspired men, and not least St Paul himself, have indeed a message and a mission not to one generation but to generations that shall be born, even to the remotest age of the church and of the world.

But, speaking of average men, and of men above the average—men who have not one of these exceptional embassies, whether of transcendent genius or of divine inspiration, to a world-wide and age-long audience—it is true—painfully true, or instructively true, according to the spirit in which it is heard and read—that they can, at the best, serve but one generation, and then must see corruption. Great ability, great knowledge, great sagacity, great personal influence, great oratory,

great generalship, great statesmanship, all are of the generation. There is nothing, in any one of these, of a nature to live on after the death of the possessor. We have seen all these by turns wield enormous power and yet pass away. We have seen one great commander give a land 'rest for forty years'—yet he was not laid on sleep before other wars must arise, and new battles be fought, on Indus or Nile, to reassure his priceless boon of a national security. We have heard of oratory which once shook senates and reversed policies—but there was no reporter then to keep alive the memory—and, after all, what, at the best, can a speech be, without the speaker? In this place, it is not inappropriate to speak of *knowledge* as ephemeral. The man who has only read, never written; the man who has spent his strength in amassing information from libraries and observatories; the man who *has* written, and written largely, and for a world of readers, while he was here to hold them—is as much lost to the succeeding generation—for there is a fashion, as well as a progress, even in knowing—as the brilliant talker who was the fascination of society, or the persuasive ecclesiastic of the pulpit or the confessional.

Commonly, if life reaches anything like its natural limit, of the threescore and ten or fourscore years, all these powers of which we have spoken wane and fade before the reaching. Not to mention probabilities of physical enfeeblement, the latter days of the life are, from perfectly distinct causes, less brilliant than the earlier—less active, less conspicuous, less impressive, less attractive, less influential. It is the rarest thing in the world, if a man remains to the end so much as in

sympathy with his generation. New customs, of thought and habit, not those of his own youth or manhood, spring into fashion around him: the chances are, that they are distasteful to him, that he never accepts, that he half dreads and half despises them, that he never makes real friends with the young, that he feels himself to have outlived the world of his own tastes and his own affections, and is made to call himself, in more than one sense, a stranger and sojourner where he was once (it may be) the model, if not the idol, of a considerable circle and following. When at last the fulness of the time is come, and he is laid to his fathers to see corruption, it is but in a very few hearts that he leaves either a void or an impression: let but six months or six weeks pass and there is nothing of him in the place which he once filled: a generation is rising which never knew him: it is only by an effort of love and duty that a few surviving friends assert his claim either to honour or to recollection. 'He served his own generation, and then fell on sleep.' This is all that can be said of him.

Shall we count this a small thing? Is it not enough if it can be said with truth of any man? If there is here the reproof of human vanity, is there not also here the repose of human restlessness? If we might but see God's hand and God's counsel in the assignment of what St Paul called at Athens 'the bounds of our habitation,' the exact scope and limit of our action and influence, and be willing, when night comes, just to lie down to sleep, under the guardianship that never slumbers, till the dawn of that day in which God, not man, shall be seen to be all in all—could we desire more? To

serve one generation—is not this large enough and grand enough to satisfy any reasonable ambition? We fear rather lest some here should be saying, It is too large and too grand for such as I am.

He served his own generation—yes, it is much to say of any man. A generation is a vast thing, an inconceivable thing, while we so speak of it. We must break it up into its elements before we can apprehend it. A generation, in the mass and in the gross, is the whole number of living and thinking beings alive at any one time upon this great earth. How can a man imagine himself to be serving all that multitude? How can he in his wildest dreams, conceive himself as being anything to a host of individuals, to a congeries of nationalities, like that? St Paul says that David served his generation—how could that be said, save in monstrous hyperbole? Did David know, at the time, that he was serving his generation in all the complications and in all the vicissitudes of his personal history? For a large part of his life he was just a keeper of sheep for his father on the solitary hill-sides of Bethlehem. Then he was a minstrel in a comfortless loveless royal home, wiling away by his harp the evil spirit from a wayward half-lunatic king. Then for years he was a hunted outlaw, escaping, with his life in his hand, from Naioth to Gath, and from Adullam to Engedi—serving nothing and no one, he may have said within himself—debarred from the exercise of the meanest functions of citizenship, from the very membership of a home, from the very society of a village. Yet God saw all these in succession as so many phases of the life-service, and thought it no fancy and no exaggeration to describe

each one as a constituent part of the whole. Some of the sweetest psalms of David were written in the useless portion of his life—could more be said to enlarge the idea of service, or to show how little a man is able so much as to estimate his own?

The service of the generation is indeed capable of every possible variety. It is, to fill the post assigned, with diligence, with seriousness, with unselfishness, with God in sight. It may be done equally by prince and peasant, by master and servant, by man and woman. He to whom the five talents are committed, and he who has but the one talent, must alike and equally 'occupy' and make profit of them, knowing that differences of station and differences of employment are essential to the very idea of a body, a society, a state, a church. None need say, Because I am not just this (particularly) or just that, I have no place, or no important place, or no equally important place, in the great community which is my particular generation of mankind. No one touches his generation at more than a few points—most people touch it but at one. That point of contact is the place of service. He serves his generation, who serves faithfully that particular town or village or hamlet—that particular neighbourhood or family or home—which is, for him, the little fragment or morsel of the generation as a whole.

There is this also to reconcile us to the humbler and less conspicuous places of service—that, the smaller the surface covered, the deeper commonly and the more intense is the influence exercised. The ecclesiastical superior who has three counties for his diocese will be the first to acknowledge that his hold upon any one of

the parishes of these three counties is infinitely less than that of the devout and devoted village pastor who goes in and out before his people, speaking to them the word of life, and ministering by the bedsides of the sick and dying. These are the compensations of the mighty service, and of the generous Lord who takes it for His own.

There is another sense also in which the thought of life as service has a tranquillizing and even equalizing influence. We have seen that the extent of space covered by it is nothing—so is it also with the duration of time. Some of the most telling services of the generation have been accomplished within the span of a few years. You mourned yesterday the early removal from the service of this University of one who died at the age of one and thirty. Henry Martyn, the Cambridge missionary, the hero (may I not call him so?) of English missionaries, died at the same exact point, at the age of thirty years and one. Younger lives than these, lives (shall I dare to say it?) closed finally in the schoolroom or in the nursery, have had the 'twelve hours' of their 'day' complete in tale and sum—their work was done, in its abiding influence upon a home and upon its inmates, though the constituent hour of their little day was but one year or one half-year long in the prosaic interpretation of the world that measures by arithmetic. We serve, I say it again, a generous Master, and He accepts as the finished service the work which it pleases Him to abridge.

'He served his own generation.'

Brethren, the thought of the generation is pregnant with applications. It reminds us of the succession and

series of the inhabitants of each spot of this earth. It reminds us that there is no standing still and no looking backward, but a perpetual movement and reaching forth, in the collective life of God's human family. Each era and each century, each age and each generation, ought to be forwarder in the race of knowledge and in the race of happiness and in the race of virtue than the one foregoing. To serve one's generation is to help it on. We ought to be ashamed of contributing nothing to the existing sum, such as we found it, of human notions and of human practices. Each true servant of his generation does, in some real though to himself unconscious way, help to make the next generation after it better and happier. Certainly in this place of brief generations we have seen, we have felt it so. Something survives of each life of service. Something is immortal of each beautiful life. Some one is assisted in being good by each servant of the past. What has not David done for them that came after? The thought never came to him—but the thing was done. Who does not turn in trouble to that man's compositions? Who stays to say to himself, David lived so many hundreds of years before Christ, how then can he sound the depths of Christian sorrow and Christian ecstasy? He was as much the commissioned minstrel of the universal church of God as Moses was its lawgiver or Isaiah its prophet. And yet David was no saint, if saintliness were perfection. His very faults, not hidden, not dissembled, not glossed over, but confessed and written down by himself as beacons of warning, have turned to the church for a testimony. So treated, so trampled under foot and risen from, his very sins were a part (let none

distort my saying) of the service of his generation. They have helped to justify God—his 51st psalm, St Paul being the interpreter[1], says so—in dealing with men as sinners. They have helped to save men—that one 51st psalm has done so—by furnishing them with 'words' for coming to God as suppliants[2].

O, if this thought, of serving the one generation, were once rooted and grounded in us; if the last suggestion, of the manifoldness and the unexpectedness of the ways and forms of serving, were but worked out by each one in reference to his own experiences, the joyous and the grievous, as it ought to be; there would be an end in us for ever of all restlessness and all mortification: there would be a definiteness and a concentration of purpose in us all: we should know exactly where we stood, and how: we should feel it honour enough and to spare for the like of us, if it could be written by the finger of God at last on the tomb of our resting, 'He served his generation...and fell on sleep.'

He served his generation—and in doing so he 'served God's counsel' concerning himself. How reassuring amidst all adverse appearances, how comforting amidst all misgivings and all gainsayings, to know that God has a will, has a counsel, concerning each life. We can believe it, on the strength of last Sunday's meditation upon the human soul as the 'one pearl of great price.' There is a value, unique and incomparable, in the living soul breathed by God Himself into this one work of His own hands. On that supposition all is explained—the mystery of incarnation, the mystery of atonement, the

[1] Romans iii. 4. [2] Hosea xiv. 2.

mystery of grace. On that supposition it is natural that God should have a will concerning us; and not only a general will, 'even our sanctification,' but a definite counsel also, framed for us in the eternity that is behind. We are not the casual, accidental, haphazard things that infidelity would make of us. God had a purpose in creating each one—or, if that expression be challenged, then in so arranging His matters as that each one of us should come to be. God had a counsel concerning each one, in fixing the place and the time, the conditions and circumstances of his being. These lives, the least of them, have a dignity beyond the patents of peers—for they have been the subject, each one, of an eternal purpose, of a divine counsel which it must be their one glory to realize. David in his shepherd vigils on the hills around Bethlehem—David exiled and outlawed by the king whom he loved through all—David meditating his psalms, immortal in their use for churches and solitudes—David at last anointed king, to reign seven years in Hebron and thirty and three in Jerusalem—was the subject, all through these vicissitudes, of a changeless will and counsel, which he persistently, though with frightful aberrations, served through all. So has it been with lesser lives and less illustrious fortunes. We, we ourselves, in our childhoods and manhoods, in our advancements and disappointments, in our little enterprises and less achievements, have been serving a counsel, and that of God. O, let us feel as we ought the mighty honour. These lives are trivial and uneventful, but they have been the subject of thought in heaven—let us live them well. Let us fulfil their high destiny. Enough if of one of us this may be

the record—'He served the counsel of God...and he fell on sleep.'

Who shall tell us, concerning one of whom this is God's record, that that sleep shall have no waking? The very words which tell of it, that it is a laying or adding or gathering to our fathers, seem to make the funeral itself a reunion; seem to say of that darkest moment of all the bereavement, when we carried the loved body and laid it in the lowest pit, that it was but a handing over of the lost one to the company and the companionship of loved ones gone before—was but the opening of the doors of the bright home in which the fathers dwell with God, and in which we ourselves, when a few days or years are past, shall, if we be found worthy, be amongst them and with them for ever. To be gathered to our fathers is a sweet periphrasis for the being buried. The grave itself, lonely as it looks, is no solitude. Hades itself is a home—a home of dear names and pleasant faces—the home of many generations, each one waiting to recognize, waiting to welcome, the servant of the present.

In the light of such revelations—death a falling on sleep, burial a gathering to the fathers—even the thought of 'seeing corruption' shall lose for us its terror. O, if we would realize the incapacity of this frame of flesh and blood for the companionship and for the inheritance of saints in light; if we would try to enter into the repeated 'must,' the reiterated 'cannot,' of the great funeral chapter—'flesh and blood *cannot* inherit'—'this mortal *must* put on'—we should not be enamoured as we are of the frail, feeble, dying body. We should groan and travail in pain for the revelation to us of the

great mystery, the divestiture of the natural, and the investiture of the spiritual. We should be able to anticipate, with something of the feeling of St Paul and of St Paul's Master, the coming of that magnificent emancipation, of which the one said, 'Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption;' and the other, 'But I have a baptism to be baptized with'—the baptism of the great passion—'and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.'

These hearts, the nobler among them at any rate, are full of ambitions. There are nearer ambitions, and ambitions more remote—yet even these last may be bounded by time. We wish well to each one of them. It is not good for a young man that his thoughts should have no future in them, even for this life. It is no good sign if a man dwelling for three years or five years within the precincts of a University has no desire for its honours, which are, being interpreted, its rewards of much toil and much self-denial, many foregoings of pleasure and many acceptances of things painful to flesh and blood. Nor yet is it desirable that any young man should be without longings which reach forth into the life beyond youth; that he should have no intentions, more or less definite, of making his mark and leaving his name in some one of the careers of professional or public toil which England opens before him with such freedom where and how and what to choose.

If St Paul were in this church today, his spirit stirred within him as it would be by the sight of so much life, so much opportunity, and so much promise, we know from his own words that he would desire to stimulate you to a great ambition. The word is his

own, in the faithful Greek—and he has also interpreted. He would call you in trumpet tones to the service of your generation. He would tell you, as we cannot, how glorious is any service which looks beyond self. Look, he would say, upon your great England. Take the measure, so far as one young heart can do it, of her privileges, of her responsibilities, of her miseries, of her dangers, of her sins. Choose out for yourself some one department of activity to which you think your special gifts, larger or smaller, point as your proper field of duty—and give yourself heartily to that service. Try as much as possible to beat down self in it—not to look so much on your own things, but every man also on the things of others. So live, he would say, all the life-day, and then humbly and thankfully fall on sleep.

One thing more he would say to you—for he has said it in his books. He tells us there of three particular ambitions, all of which he felt, and the third of which was his life. This third was the ambition 'to be accepted of Christ,' whatever others might say of him. Is that ambition new and strange to any of you, young brothers, who have listened this afternoon? If it be new, give it its first entrance—if it be not new, cherish it for your life. O, what unity, what dignity, what sanctity, is given at once to a life of which this is the motto and this the superscription—It is my ambition, present or absent, to please Jesus Christ.

XXX.

THE VIRTUE OF VIOLENCE.

St Matthew xi. 12.

The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

St Luke xvi. 16.

The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

THE two texts are more alike than the English version makes them. Violence is the key-note of both. So strongly does that word mark the text from St Matthew, that a hasty reader might almost imagine the verse to speak of hostility to the gospel. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence' might seem to suggest the idea of some fiery persecutor 'breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.' And the following clause, 'The violent take it by force,' might appear to be the description of a siege or a storm—nay, might even be rendered, 'Violent men plunder (or, make spoil of) it,' as the epistle to the Hebrews, using a derivative of the same word, commends them for 'taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods.'

But the second text precludes any such misapprehension. 'The kingdom of God is preached, and every

man presses into it'—still the same word, 'enters it by violence,' but with an unmistakable context, speaking only of friendliness.

Violence then is here for once made a virtue. We must put aside all such associations with the word as the Pentateuch, the psalms, and the prophets give us. 'The earth was filled with violence, and God looked upon it, and, behold, it was corrupt.' 'Him that loveth violence His soul hateth.' 'Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.' We must forget for a moment the characteristic glory of the Redeemer Himself, that 'He did no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.' We must enter, as it were, a new province of divine morality, in which a virtue and a vice have changed names and changed places, and violence, not gentleness, has become the predominant feature of such as shall be saved.

We have before us one of those Scripture paradoxes of which another stands very near it in the text from St Luke—where the conduct of an unscrupulous agent is made to furnish a lesson, not of imitation certainly, but yet not wholly of avoidance, to the disciples of Jesus Christ. The unjust steward showed, even in his dishonesty, a farsightedness of prudence, which it were well if Christian people, while eschewing the dishonesty, could always exercise in reference to their own higher aims and nobler interests. In another place the Lord of love, using language absolutely unparalleled, compels even hatred into His service, saying, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'

Such passages might give some encouragement to the statement, opening certainly (if there were time for it) an instructive discussion, that every vice is the perversion or misapplication of a virtue—insomuch that the perfect man would be he who, while he changes the direction, the motive, and the principle, yet refuses to suppress or smother any one of the feelings or dispositions of which he is conscious as having their root in the natural ground of his heart.

But we have enough to occupy our brief time this afternoon in the single example given us in the two texts.

The generous and intrepid herald of Jesus Christ is now a prisoner, soon to become a martyr, for 'constantly speaking the truth and boldly rebuking vice.' A momentary misgiving has distressed him in his solitude, as it never had done in his activity. He sends two of his disciples to Christ Himself with the question, 'Art Thou He that should come?' A practical reply is given to this question, and the messengers are dismissed with it to their master. As they quit the scene, Christ discourses to the multitude on the text of the Baptist and his work. He bears emphatic testimony to the greatness of the man and the dignity of the mission. Yet there is a sense, He says, in which the humblest Christian is greater than that greatest of the prophets. John opened the kingdom to others, but he stood outside it himself. It may seem a strong and even a harsh saying. It ought at least to elevate our conception of the privilege of being a Christian. It ought to make us ask ourselves in what sense it can be said of us, and how alone we can make it true, that we are greater men

than the Baptist. The texts will help us in answering this question. Three subordinate points of interest in them claim a passing notice. (1) First, the ministry of the Baptist, short as it was in duration, slight apparently in its consequences, is made the turning-point of the dispensations. 'The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached.' The spiritual history of the world was cleft in twain by that brief mission. (2) Secondly, our Lord speaks of that mission as already part of the past—almost of the far past. 'From the days,' He says, 'of John the Baptist until now.' And yet, when He spoke, the fatal birthday was not yet come—the feast and the dance, the rash oath and the ghastly execution. Time moves quickly when God is making history: one day is sometimes as a thousand years, no less truly than the converse. (3) Yet once more, there is a strength in the expression, 'The kingdom of God is being preached, and every man is pressing (with violence) into it,' which makes it less the statement of a fact than the utterance of a triumphant anticipation. 'Every man forcing his way into the kingdom,' ere yet the great sacrifice was offered or the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? This is that tone of prophetic jubilation which breaks in so often upon sadder themes of discourse as the Saviour marches towards the Jerusalem of the last conflict and the Calvary of the cross and passion. 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' 'The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified.' 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

But now let us fix all our thoughts upon that which we

have called the key-note of the two texts—the Virtue of Violence; its place in the ethics of Jesus Christ; its action in taking and keeping possession of that state of dignity and of blessedness which is here called, as it is so often called in the gospels, the kingdom of heaven or of God. 'I appoint unto you a kingdom.' 'He hath made us kings.' This kingdom is here described by one of its characteristics. It suffers violence. Men of violence seize it by force. Though it is a gospel, and speaks in softest and gentlest tones, yet it is not by softness or gentleness, but by a sort of moral violence, that men make their way into it.

Such descriptions do not stand alone, nor most prominently, nor without much of contrast and counterpoise, in the book of God. Humility and patience, forbearance and charity, are far more frequently than their opposites the subject of exhortation and praise. A religion of violence is left for Mahomet and the Koran: a vociferation which would storm heaven by prayer is wisely relegated to the conventicles of the fanatic. And yet, brethren, we may be quite sure, if the two texts are the sayings of Christ, that there is a vehemence, and even a violence, which is an ingredient of the true religion, and the want of which is a serious and even fatal defect in the (so called) religion of many.

We shall try to draw the character of the βιαστής, or man of violence, as Christ here introduces him, in two or three of his relations to the kingdom of grace.

We shall see him most distinctly by setting him in each instance face to face with his opposite. Evidently the violence which will take no denial, which forces its way and storms the gate and presses toward the goal

is mentally contrasted with a misplaced modesty, or a hesitating indecision, or a vacillating doublemindedness, unstable in all its ways, and absolutely disqualified for a life, inward and outward, of resolution, effort, and enterprise.

There are two or three chief departments of the life of the kingdom, in each of which we shall quickly discern between the violent man and his opposite.

1. The royal life—the life of 'the kingdom'—is a life, in part, of renunciations. It has to make sacrifices. There are pleasures, there are pursuits, there are employments, which are incompatible with the new being. To call them by their Scripture name, there are *sins*, various in shape and form, different for different natures—pleasant, attractive, delicious sins—or else, ugly and odious, yet none the less inglorious and tyrannical—which cannot be retained if we would be sons of the kingdom. Cannot we see why Christ should make violence a virtue in respect to these? The violent man, determined to take the kingdom by force, goes to war with his sins—makes no excuse for them—never pretends to say that they are venial, or to say that they are natural, or to say that they must be gently dealt with, improved away by time or age, asked indulgence for, whatever of them remains, at the footstool of One who is 'very pitiful and of tender mercy.' He must be rid of them—and he knows it—or he cannot enter heaven. Therefore he brings the fire and sword of the new kingdom into their encampments and into their fastnesses; burns and slays without mercy, 'as though they were his enemies;' cuts off from himself, so far as is possible, all their avenues and approaches of

tempting; counts nothing worth keeping if it involves truce, treaty, or compromise with them. The kingdom 'suffers violence' under him—for he is a βιαστής, and will take it by force.

Set over against him, in this first aspect, the tender and delicate combatant, the man of silken mail and gossamer weapon, the man of fastidious tastes and agreeable manners and easy compliances. Hear him in his secret chamber accounting to himself for his failures; excusing himself to himself for his inconsistencies; hoping against hope that the next time he shall do better; daring sometimes to entertain the peradventure that the tale of gospel strictness may be 'of little meaning though the words are strong'—that room will be found, somewhere and somehow, for a person like him, amongst the sturdier soldiers of the cross, who perhaps have had fewer trials, or perhaps have had a stronger 'natural force' of good.

Who that 'looks on this picture and on that' can have a moment's hesitation in choosing between them? Certainly, if we look onward but a little in the lifetime of each, and mark 'whereunto' either will 'grow'—the one going from strength to strength, advancing year by year in vigour and nobleness, till at last, in the evening of the long day, strength itself mellows into sweetness; the other gradually losing the charm (there is such a thing) of weakness, keeping only (for these too are in it) its contemptibleness and its self-contempt, till at last, in some exceptionally cloudy and dark hour, it falls into some snare of the devil, the world itself, so long lived for, shouting the verdict of infamy—we shall understand why our Lord should here have made violence a virtue—

meaning by it that vehemence of the self-determination which will not miss the heaven where only righteousness dwells with God.

2. We will turn to a different province of the gospel kingdom. It is that, not of what is commonly meant by morals—though indeed the boundary line may be much too roughly and coarsely drawn between them—but of faith.

Every one knows, most men have felt at some period of their lives, that the 'royal' life is not easy in what it demands of the reason. It professes to have a revelation—in other words, an unveiling of secrets—a disclosure by God Himself of certain invisible realities which could not be ascertained without His interposition. A life beyond death, and some little glimpse of its nature—at all events, the one particular, that it will be a life lived in God's presence in a sense in which this life is not so even for the Christian—is one of these. A divine sacrifice of loving and availing propitiation—the necessity presupposed, the fact asserted, the method unexplained—is another of them. A Holy Spirit, secret in His operations, real in His influences, apprehensible in His effects—given for the asking, grieved by sin, sealing the man for glory—this is another, and we might add to them.

Now the treatment of this professed revelation is very various. It is in many ways a touchstone of character, 'revealing the thoughts of hearts' by their manner of dealing with it. Our subject suggests two of these. There is the gentle treatment, and there is the 'violent' treatment. There is the man who cannot hurry or be hurried; the man who must read what is to be said

about it and will give his judgment tomorrow; the man who (to take his own account of himself) is all candour and impartiality, is perfectly open to argument and evidence, feels that there is much to be said on both sides and on all sides of everything, admires the character of Christ, acknowledges the adaptation of the Gospel to human need, would give much—all, he says—for a clear conviction, but, on the other hand, is so afraid of being precipitate, has seen so much of human exaggeration and human credulity, feels so gravely the proneness of mankind to enthusiasm and fanaticism, to the erection of altars and the deification of heroes, that he dares not to adventure the bold plunge for life or death, must wait yet, and yet enquire, and yet reconsider, and, having done all, yet doubt. And thus it comes to pass that, if he is not against Christ—and he would be irritated and shocked to be so described—no one could possibly speak of him as on Christ's side. The weight of his example, of his speech, of his influence, is lost at least to the true cause, if it is not given to the false. Men cannot 'take knowledge of him,' he cannot take knowledge of himself, 'that he has been with,' or that he is for, 'Jesus.'

We can understand, here again, why Christ should make violence a virtue even in believing. Certainly He would not catch votes at any price—would not commend haste or rashness, or expect any man to believe first and then enquire. You know how plainly He dealt upon earth with persons who came to Him ignorantly, or offered themselves prematurely as His disciples. Let them thoroughly acquaint themselves with the terms, let them thoughtfully count the cost,

then let them come—or not come—as reason and conscience and the sovereign will may direct them.

Yet even in this most difficult, most delicate, most critical matter, of believing or not believing, there is a timidity which is no prudence, and there is a vehemence which is no presumption. The gospel of Jesus Christ, if it is anything, is a life. It is not an opinion, it is not a doctrine, it is not a thing to be stowed away among a multitude of other things, ideas, theories, probabilities, peradventures, which may be modified fifty times over without a consequence, or forgotten altogether for months or years without harm or loss. If it is anything, it is that which must unmake and remake, guide and mould the being. If it is anything, it is a life. It is the entrance upon a new idea and plan of existence. It is the formation of new companionships and the cultivation of new sympathies. It is the setting out upon a new course and race which has its goal in worlds unseen. It is the putting off of the old self, and the investiture with 'that new man which was created' (as at this season) in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and which has to be 'put on,' in doing and suffering, in living and dying, by each one of His redeemed.

All this being so, it is folly, it is madness, it is suicide, to leave the question of faith or no faith to settle itself by caprice or accident, or never to settle itself while there is daylight to walk by. These matters are not for dreams or for deathbeds. They are for the conscious waking thoughts of living, feeling, resolving, and acting men. They are for the life of the life—they are for the life above this life, which is also the life beyond.

Therefore there is commendation, in this province as

in the earlier, for the man of vehemence who will brook no delay and no diversion in the settlement of the question of questions—how, on what principle, in what allegiance, he is to live. Instead of playing with doubts, instead of trifling with evidences, instead of saying to himself, 'Tomorrow shall be as this day, and doubtless much more abundant' in its opportunities for settling what to think of Christ, this man gives himself no rest till he has sent out mind and soul to interrogate the God-Man—'Art Thou He that should come, or must we look for another?' art Thou the desire of hearts as well as of nations, the mysterious object of all these yearnings and longings which constitute the very *differentia* of the being, made in God's likeness, and then fallen from his uprightness—or must I look onward, onward, onward still, for my satisfaction, till some other and more thrilling and more commanding voice shall say within me, Come, thou that art weary and burdened, and I will give thee rest?

The man of violence must have his answer, and, when he has it, he will embrace, he will avow, he will live it. This one thing I do—I follow after till I know—and then I follow after, till I attain. The kingdom of God is preached in my hearing, and, if not otherwise, I will take it by force.

3. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. Men of violence take it by force.' We have touched upon two points in illustration of the saying—the conflict with sin, and the struggle of believing. We must find room for one topic more—the life into which the man finds entrance through faith. It is a life of two chief activities. There is an activity God-ward, and there

is an activity man-ward. The one is devotion, the other is work. In both of these we see a wide difference between the man of violence and his opposite.

(1) There is a figure with which we are very familiar in reference to man's spiritual intercourse with his Maker—it is the figure of wrestling. The phrase is derived no doubt from the mysterious narrative of Jacob's night-long wrestling at Peniel, on the eve of an anxious and perilous day, with one who is first called 'a man,' but who afterwards reveals Himself in a character far more august, as the possessor of a name not to be searched into, and of a power of benediction uniquely divine. The prophet Hosea goes before us in interpreting, when he writes, 'He had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto Him: he found Him in Beth-el—even the Lord God of hosts.' St Paul uses the figure repeatedly of the ἀγὼν or struggle; and once at least he distinctly applies it to vehemence in praying, when he writes to the Colossians, 'I would that ye knew what great *conflict* I have for you—that your hearts may be comforted.' He speaks not of active efforts in preaching or ministering—for he is at the time a prisoner at Rome—but of a wrestling with God Himself in prayer for the bestowal of spiritual grace upon absent and distant churches. St Paul, in so writing, describes himself as the βιαστὴς who will take no denial, who is not afraid to borrow from the scene in Peniel words of unparalleled vehemence, venturing to say to God Himself, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.'

We know, brethren, how easily this sort of vehemence in praying may be made offensive, or even ludicrous,

in the parodies of coarse and vulgar fanatics. It is not in the four hundred and fifty idolatrous prophets on mount Carmel, crying from morning till evening, 'O Baal, hear us,' and in the desperation of a long-delayed answer cutting themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them, that we shall find our example, in this province, of the man of violence who will take heaven by force. Rather is it in the still garden, under the paschal moon, and beneath the olive-trees of Gethsemane—where supplication was offered, 'with strong crying and tears,' and with a sweat like great drops of blood—and where each petition breathed had its *εἰ δυνατὸν* appended, and where the first entreaty, that the cup might pass, is soon replaced by the second—'If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.' It may seem an incongruous term to apply to that most submissive, most filial devotion; yet we should fail indeed to convey any just idea of the Christian *βιαστὴς* if we hesitated to see his exemplar in the Saviour of the agony, or to wish for him any other kind or any higher degree of earnestness than that which there and then was put forth.

Contrast with this earnestness, this conflict, this wrestling, this vehemence and violence of supplication, the far commoner case of the tame timid half-hearted worshipper, who, not receiving all at once the very thing asked for, or the conscious removal, on the instant, of every doubt and every misgiving in the act of praying, infers failure or accepts refusal, acquiesces in the not having, and goes his way as if from a duty done though the soul still thirsts and has appetite. Or contrast with

Beth-el, or contrast with Gethsemane, that other kind of praying, which, when it has seemed to invoke an access of grace or even a visit from the holy One, rises up hastily and goes out if there be but the faintest whisper or signal of the divine presence, the slightest indication that perhaps the prayer may be heard, and, according to the promise, the Father and the Son may be on the way to make their abode with the man.

Which of the two, think we, is the worthier worshipper —the man who suffers the tiniest obstacle, the mere 'earth-born cloud' of indolence or indifference, to daunt him—the man who never meant his own words and flees in alarm from their realization—or that other who reminds himself of the βιαστὴς of the Saviour's parable, and kneels on and prays on and hopes on till the answer shall come and the day-star arise on the heart?

(2) We spoke too of an aspect of the 'royal' life man-ward—the aspect of work, the aspect of the human dealing. Is there, even here, place for the man of violence?

On the first hearing, perhaps, we may be inclined to answer in the negative. The thought comes to us, perhaps, of some Saul of Tarsus in the days of his ignorance—some self-constituted spiritual inquisitor who thinks that he does God service by forcing his own pronunciation or his own accentuation of the Shibboleth upon casual or preoccupied hearers, and declares a man lost and outcast because he demurs to the jurisdiction or because he resents the impertinence of the questioner. And we say, If this be Christianity, I will none of it—if this be faithfulness, let me live and die outside its habitation.

This, brethren, is not Christian, because it is not Christlike. If this is the only vehemence, the only violence, which the sense of the texts has room for, we grant that there is no application for them in the region of relative duty.

No, but pass in thought from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the apostle, the confessor and at last martyr of Jesus Christ, and see whether there was not still in him not only a striking but a beautiful pattern of the violence we are in quest of. Behold him compassing sea and land, not to make proselytes but to save souls. Hear him wishing himself, were it but lawful, to be accursed from Christ for his brethren. Listen to that cry wrung from his heart, as he passes in review his many labours and sufferings, and bethinks himself of one kind of pain more acute than any that can touch the body, the anguish of a sensitive sympathy with weakness, the anguish of a burning indignation against wrong. 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' Yes, the βιαστὴς speaks, and it is the very 'violence' which has made him great. To that violence Europe owes her evangelization. The gentle amiable beautiful philanthropist would have let her sleep.

It has been so always. There is a force necessary, as well as a sweetness, to the perfection of the Christian character. All the great works have been done by it. Charming manners, conciliatory speeches, concessory compromises, are not powers. They grease the wheels of the world, but they do not propel the engines. There has always been an independence, there has always been an outspokenness, there has always been a willing-

ness to stand alone, to go forth without the gate and the camp of the conventional and the traditional, in the men who have told upon their times, in the men who have made history, in the men who have set forward on its march the cause of good. This is the violence of which the texts tell, in its positive activity. This is that for lack of which most men—men of business, professional men, literary men, men of society—just follow the tradition, swim with the stream, 'are dead while they live' as to anything individual, anything that shall be permanent because of them. The want of this makes politicians partisans and statesmen demagogues. We want the βιαστής, to ask the man within him what to do, and to make the man without do it. For lack of this violence—because it dies out and does not replace itself—'states, like individuals, after a certain period of maturity, inevitably tend to decay.'

Inevitably? No. It is in the power of the congregation present this afternoon to say that it shall not be so with England. I might have stood in many a congregation gathered this day for worship, and felt that the text about men of violence was little better than a mockery. It is not so here. The danger here is not the destitution but the misdirection of violence. The danger here is lest in any character there be a violence over-strong because selfish—lest there be a force of will for the self-indulgence, for the self-assertion, for the self-aggrandisement, for the self-isolating and self-idolizing, which is refused to the self-conquest, refused to the self-mastery, refused to the self-consecration, refused to the self-sacrifice.

O, brethren, if the experiences of one man could be

made by any process of assimilation the experiences of another, how eloquent, how persuasive, would be the sermons preached from this place by the old man to the young. What could he not tell you of the consequences of dallying with faults, of parleying with tempters, of negotiating with sins? What could he not say of the terrible identity of the being, allowing no cutting off of the past, no beginning quite afresh, no absolute having done with 'the time past of our life?' With what emphasis would he speak to you of the incomparable blessedness of the βιαστής, who has fought it out with his sins early, 'while the evil days come not'—who has settled betimes the mighty alternative between the infidel and the Christian, and can say positively, while there is time to do as well as to say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day'—who can kneel down before a real God, ask what he will, and feel that he has received—who can move amongst his fellows as one that has a life within, shining out naturally and half unconsciously into the life without. Blessed be God, it is not too late to say these things here—let him that heareth say the Amen.

XXXI.

LIFE A DIALOGUE.

Hebrews iv. 12, 13.

The word of God.....with whom we have to do.

THE first text opens a sentence, and the second closes it. The connexion of the two is not obvious: the combination at first sight may appear capricious. No rendering could express the antithesis which is their real meeting-point, without some sacrifice of idiom and even of clearness. Literally, the two texts are, the one, 'the word of God'—the other, 'unto whom our word is.' So that we have before us the two thoughts—the word of God to us, and, our word to God—and the reading of this riddle, the two 'words,' of God to man, and of man to God, is the real object and subject of the sermon.

We are here at the end of a long argument. Close attention is required to follow the steps of it. There are missing (or rather, latent) links in it, to be supplied mentally by the reader. But the general idea is simple. There is a rest of God, which is the goal of the long race of the human creation. It has been so from the beginning. The rest itself is spoken of in the second chapter of the Bible. It was realized by the old patriarchs as their true city and country, while they lived the tent-life here. It was typified in the promise

of Canaan: typified, but certainly not fulfilled; more certainly, not exhausted. Long ages after the entrance of Israel into Canaan, a psalmist speaks (by clear implication) of God's rest as still open—still liable to be forfeited, therefore still capable of being attained. Nothing certainly has occurred since the psalmist's day which could be supposed to have cancelled promise by performance. The rest of God is still in reserve for His true people. Let us give diligence to enter into it. Let us not forfeit it, as one whole generation forfeited Canaan, by unbelief. Thus we reach the double text—which tells of the impossibility of eluding God's judgment by any differences of circumstance or by any counterfeits of character. The word of God, His utterance in judging, His discernment of character, His estimate of conduct, is no dead or dormant thing, it is living and active: it is sharper than any two-edged sword: it divides and discriminates where man sees only the inseparable: soul and spirit, the immaterial part of us in one aspect and the same immaterial part of us in another aspect, it can cleave in twain: thoughts and feelings, exercises of intellect and exercises of affection, it is apt and quick to distinguish between and to pronounce upon. No created being can wear mask or veil in that presence: all things are bare and naked, all things are exposed and opened: the head that would bend and bow itself, in conscious guilt and shame, before the fierce light of the divine presence, is lifted (such perhaps is the figure) and thrown back in full exposure before the eye of the examiner and the judge, 'unto whom'—so the sentence ends—'our word is;' 'with whom,' according to the beautiful paraphrase which no

later version will wish or dare to improve away—'with whom we have to do.'

A magnificent subject is before us. The two 'words.' There is a word of God to us—there is also a word of ours to God. The two words. The divine word, and the human. The word which speaks, and the word which answers and makes reply.

1. 'The word of God.'

There are many such words. There is a word of God in nature. 'The invisible things of God are seen,' St Paul says—and it is but a change of figure to say, the inaudible things of God are heard—'ever since creation, in the things that are made.' Order diversified, which is a true description of nature, tells of a power which is no brute force—in other words, of a mind in exercise upon it. There is a word of God in Providence. St Paul used a term[1] which means 'deeds' as well as 'works'—things done as well as things made. Consequence modified, which is a true description of providence, tells of a power working which is no mechanical agency—in other words, of a mind purposing, and realizing that purpose in ceaseless processes of adaptation. There is not sound only, but voice in both these; a voice implying a personality, and a voice presupposing an auditor. If the definition of 'word' is 'intelligence communicating itself,' here, twice over, is a word of God, and here is an ear to which it makes appeal.

The epistle from which the texts come carries us beyond this vaguer and more general divine utterance to another of which the very *differentia* is the person-

[1] Romans i. 20, *τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα.*

ality. God, it says, having of old time spoken in the prophets, utterers of His truth in sundry modes and manifold particulars, spoke to us at the end of 'these days'—at the dividing line (as it were) of present and future, of time and eternity—in One of whom the title, the unique incommunicable title, is 'Son.' In this grand opening sentence a new idea is introduced into the phrase before us and into the divine dealing which it embodies. For although we do not read into the epistle to the Hebrews that more technical sense of 'word' in which it actually personifies the divine Son in the gospel, epistle, and apocalypse of St John, we are yet on the very verge and brink of it in the text, and we are in the actual presence of that direct communication of God with His creatures which implies a person to conduct it. 'The word of God,' if not a person, is yet a personal communication as much in the voice that utters as in the ear that hears.

This word was a voice before it was a book. The living life wrote itself upon other lives—they in their turn wrote it upon others, ere yet a page of gospel Scripture was written—on purpose that the distinction between 'letter' and 'spirit' might be kept ever fresh and vital; on purpose that the characteristic of the new revelation might never fade or be lost sight of—how that it is God speaking in His Son—God speaking, and God bidding man to make reply.

But where would the word have been by this time, left to itself—left, I mean, to echo and to tradition? To what depth might it not have sunk, of corruption in the teachers, of ignorance in the taught? If God had left us without a book, where by this time had been the

voice? It pleased Him by His holy inspiration to move and to guide the pen of living men: and it pleased Him by His providence wonderfully to watch over the thing written: and it pleased Him, in days when there was neither scholarship to revise nor machinery to multiply the writing, to put such love into hearts for those perishable fugitive scrolls of rude, almost hieroglyphic manuscript, that they were treasured up in cells and churches as the most precious of heirlooms: and it pleased Him at last to stimulate into a marvellous inventiveness His own gift (grace we might well call it) of human reason, so that the completed volume of the once scattered 'biblia' was multiplied by the new miracle of the printing-press into the myriad 'bibles' which are now sown broadcast over the surface of the inhabited globe: and thus by the twofold action of the inspired word and the inspiring Spirit to bring to pass that mighty revolution, of mind, heart, and soul, for which we at least of this University shall never cease to give thanks as the blessed and glorious reformation.

Shall we not sometimes take ourselves seriously to task for the low and indifferent tone into which we have too often suffered ourselves to fall as touching this book—severing ourselves thereby not more from the champions of the reformation than from the fathers of the church, and too often, in our zeal for ecclesiastical names and forms, risking the very thing itself which makes it worth while to be a churchman?

'There are,' St Paul says, 'so many kinds of voices in the world'—say, a hundred, or say, a thousand—'and no one of them is without signification.' Even the divine voices are many. There is a word of God in nature,

and there is a word of God in providence: there is a word of God in science, and there is a word of God in history: there is a word of God in the church, and there is a word of God in the bible. And yet all these are external, as such, to the very 'spirit of the man which is in him.' The word of God which is the real speech and utterance of all these voices comes at last to the man himself in conscience. I speak not now of that more limited sense of conscience in which it is the guiding and warning voice within, saying, 'This is the way of duty, walk thou in it.' The word of God in conscience is more, much more, than this. It is that of which our Lord said, in reference to the volume of His own evidences, 'Yea, and why even of yourselves'—without waiting for sign or portent—'why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' You can discern the face of the earth and of the sky; you can infer from certain indications the approach of shower or heat: how is it that ye cannot infer deity from the divine, the Emmanuel presence from the Emmanuel character? The appeal was to conscience, not so much in its sensitiveness to right and wrong as in its appreciativeness of the false and the true, of God speaking this and God not speaking that.

Thus it is that the word of God, as it at last reaches the spirit and soul of the man, is the net result of a thousand separate sayings, no one of which by itself is the absolute arbiter of the being. It cannot become this till it has made itself audible to the conscience. Till then it is suggestive, it is contributory, it is evidential—it is not the verdict, nor the judgment, nor the sentence, nor the 'word.'

This is no encouragement to the dallying, to the procrastinating, to the fastidiousness and the waywardness, which is characteristic of the generation. On the contrary, it is a trumpet-call to decision. It says, There is a word of God somewhere. It cannot be found in a dictionary or an index. It cannot be heard at second-hand from fathers or councils. It cannot be ascertained by a glance at holy Scripture, or by a tradition from holy homes or holy persons. It must be heard in the conscience—but the conscience itself must be informed, must be disciplined, must be educated, by many a hard-fought fight with sin, and many an anxious interrogation of the heart naked and opened. The word of God is a personal word: it speaks to the personal being, as God made and as God sees him.

We seem yet to lack one thing. The word speaks in conscience—speaks to the consciousness: but who speaks it? It is one of the loosenesses of a popular theology, to make conscience both voice and ear—to confound (in other words) conscience and the Spirit. Of all confusions, as of all ingratitudes, this surely is the greatest. To leave out the Spirit, under that which is primarily and distinctively the dispensation of the Spirit; to leave out the Spirit, which is Christ's promised presence in His own; the Spirit, which for such as know themselves is the one light and the one comfort and the one safeguard of the fallen and ever falling creature—confusion is not the word for it: ignorance is not the word for it: heterodoxy, heresy, is not the word for it: it is folly, it is madness, it is suicide. The word itself, to be audible as such, must have become the Spirit's voice: then it takes of the things of

God and speaks them into the conscience, which is the consciousness, of the man.

We have no time in this brief address for explanations of difficulties, still less for answers to cavils. One question, however, always meets us when we speak of the individual divine teaching, the direct divine communication. It is this. Men professing to be individually taught of the Spirit, men whose lives give no contradiction to the claim, differ widely from one another in their ideas and statements of truth. How can the same Holy Spirit teach one man this doctrine, and another that? What is this but to introduce uncertainty into all truth—to give a perilous shake to the creed of the church catholic, and a dangerous handle to the conceit and vanity of the fanatic? 'We are not careful to answer.' We say boldly that true unity, even of doctrine, is never to be found in identity of speech. Words are poor exponents, at the best, in things divine. The very archetype of any truth, as it exists in the bosom of God, cannot be stereotyped in the tongue of any people. Neither in Greek nor Latin nor Hebrew, nor yet—still less it may be—in English or French or German, can the phrase be found which shall so express as to embody it. Consequently men will use different terms for the selfsame item of revelation: if they use not different terms, they will mean different things by them: and He who 'hath the residue of the Spirit' harmonizes all into one for those with whom He deals in grace. Patience, brethren—patience and courage—patience and hope. A time is coming when all shall be one, who have here 'drunk of one Spirit.' Till then let no superficial uniformity presume to affect

the title of a spiritual unity. 'There is one body,' in the sight of God, wheresoever there is 'one Spirit.' There, in the sight of God: there, amidst all diversities of speech and thought: there, in the sight of God, *alone.* 'It is written in the prophets, They shall be all (severally and spiritually) taught of God.'

2. There is a word of God to us. There is also a word of ours to God. 'Unto Him our word is.'

The particular point in the view of the holy writer was that of accountability. God speaks in judgment, and we speak to give account.

The first readers were on the eve of a terrible crisis. They had to choose between Christianity and Judaism, between religion and patriotism—almost therefore between duty and duty. It was reasonable to speak to them of the word which is a two-edged sword in discriminating, and of the word which pleads guilty or not guilty at the bar of judgment.

Brethren, we also are passing through a great crisis. You will think that I speak of some political or national crisis. But I do not. I speak of a crisis greater even than these: greater (shall I dare the paradox?) just because less great: greater, because individual. We came hither to escape for a short hour alike from the excitements and from the depressions of event and circumstance, whether in the private sense or the public, that we may take account, each one, of matters lying within, above, and beyond all these; matters which a false modesty might induce us to call infinitely less important, but which make up by intenseness for what they lack in extent—nay, which are to the other as is eternity to time.

Crisis means trial. The crisis of which I speak is that lifelong trial, in which each one of us is standing before God's judgment-seat, and upon the decision of which depends for each one a future not to be measured by years and not to be told in terms of human speech. The text says of this crisis, of this trial, that it is the interchange, so to say, of two 'words'—the dialogue (I had almost said) of two speakers—the word of God judging, and the word of the man making answer and giving account.

'With whom we have to do.'

How differently, if we gave utterance to the actual experience, should we express the 'having to do' of our own life.

We should speak perhaps of the home—at this moment (for many) the absent or distant home, in which nevertheless, for all who have a heart in them, so much of the life's life is at this moment centred. Or we should speak of the life of this place, with its busy interests, its exciting competitions, its pleasant companionships, its dear friendships. Certainly 'we have to do' with these: it would be affectation to pretend that they touch us not.

We have to do, all of us, with a world which 'is too much with us;' a world, in these early days, of immature judgments and defective principles, but none the less strong and potent for us who live in it—singularly imperious in its edicts, and terribly severe in its retaliations. It is the type of another world, larger and older, but not more real or more vital, in which we shall all of us some day be playing our parts; a world which has its own code, differing in its different

strata, of morality and honour, but before which the common thing is to crouch and to grovel, to 'flee even when no man pursueth,' and to imagine a thousand voices of terrible blame or delicious praise which never spoke and never whispered.

We could all understand saying of these or of any of them that with them we have to do—'to them is our word,' of accountability and of self-excuse.

But it is of God that the text speaks. Will you deny that it is a hard, if it is a grand saying? Many thoughts lie in it. Read it first in its first sense. Our word of *account* is to God. O, if we could take the thought home, what an effect would it have upon the life. What an independence, what a dignity, would it give to it. How would it put an end to that running to and fro to give in our account, which makes so many lives so servile and so contemptible. What pains do we take to please, to give satisfaction, to win applause—to be admired if it may be so, at all events to avoid censure, one of another. What haste do we make to explain, to excuse, to apologize for, to daub with obtrusive white-wash, our little dubious acts, our little unfortunate speeches. What a forgetfulness do we see everywhere, and first of all in ourselves, of the great principle of the Godward word, of the 'with whom we have to do,' of this text. What should we think of the servant who carried to the next door his excuses for deficiencies of duty? 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.' But which of us carries straight to God his apology, his confession, his (if there be such a thing) explanation? Nay, but which of us has first sought from God the

direction and the instruction itself which is the topic and subject of the explanation? We never thought of it. We never realized the privilege of the direct access. We never claimed the divine προσαγωγή which is the passport of the presence-chamber.

If we would but have asked of God our text and our subject, our word of counsel to the enquirer, our word of reassurance to the doubter; if we would but have carried back to Him our account of the word spoken in the pulpit, of the word spoken in the study, as though in His name, as though for the guidance of souls that He has made; if in less things than these we would form the habit prescribed in the text, 'To Him is our word, with Him is our concern'—what a weight, what an influence, what a sanctity, what an inspiration, would be given to our common words, to our everyday remarks and comments upon men and things: for then we should carry about us that indefinable something, which says, in tones more persuasive in proportion as they are less obtrusive, This man knows and feels that he has to do with God.

All this sets in a strong light the duty of doing it. It shows us what is meant by self-examination, what is meant by confession. 'With Him,' directly and personally, 'we have to do.' Just to carry to God Himself, in the nightly confessional where we meet the one Judge, just the very thing itself which we did wrong, which we said wrong, just in so many words, this very day which is now being gathered to its parent days—that is the Christian even-song. So judging ourselves, we shall not be judged. Thus anticipating, we shall also prevent, the judgment: for us it will never come in its terrors, never come in its

'clouds of heaven.' To Him *is* our word, not only shall be. With Him we *have*, not shall have, to do. 'Ye are come,' this epistle says, 'to God the Judge of all'—and, in Him, 'to Jesus' also—and, in Him, 'to the blood of sprinkling.'

The word of account is the first thought of the text. But it is not the only one. It is not perhaps the most beautiful or the most attractive. The spirit of the man has other words besides this to utter in the ear with which it has to do.

The speech of God is to me, and my speech is to Him. Might we but enter into this conception, what an elevation, what a grandeur, would it give to the life. The speech of God is to thee—His discourse, His self-disclosure, His mind uttering itself, His Spirit breathing itself in converse. And my speech is to Him—my discourse, my self-disclosure, my uttered mind, my soul expressing itself in audible thought. What is this but to give to the life itself a new Christian name, at the font of a spiritual baptism—and to send it forth afresh into all the relationships and all the occupations of the being, having this for its title, Conversation with God? Conversation, not in any archaic or obsolete sense of that word, but in its most modern, most colloquial meaning—the interchange of speech between two living persons, each in turn the auditor, each in his turn making reply. The speech of God is with me, and my speech is with Him.

It will have been worth our while, brethren, to have met this afternoon, if we may carry away with us this one thought, Life itself is a conversation with God. 'As a man talketh with his friend' was God's own

account of His communication with the hero-saint of Israel: then it was the privilege of the one or two—now it is the very birthright and citizenship of the promiscuous world of the redeemed.

We speak here to all sorts and conditions of the spiritual being, however uniform may be the outward state and circumstance of an academical audience. 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness'—sad thoughts, anxious thoughts, painful memories, sorrowful self-judgments, may be agitating at this moment some souls within these bodies. Is there not in the topic before us comfort and brightness for all these?

Which of all us shall any longer be the sport and prey of depressed or disconsolate feelings, when the voice of God is in his ear, saying, Hearken to me, speak with me, and I will be thy life? Which of us shall any longer be at the mercy of his fellow for the sparkle and zest of existence? Who shall any longer call himself lonely and isolated, a stranger to the interests and excitements of other men, to the circles in which talk instructive and charming is the privilege of the popular, the sociable, and the entertaining? Who shall any longer complain of this place or that place, this employment or that employment, this society or that society, as dull, distasteful, or dreary—when he may hear, if he will, the voice of God, in more than the allegory of paradise, walking in earth's garden in the cool of the day—hear Him enquire for him, call him by name, and begin to talk with him of things which eye hath not seen? Nay, if the speech of God is with thee, and thine with Him—if, not the utterance only as from a far-off sky, but the very converse of the divine with

the human in all nearness and in all sympathy, has any place or any experience in thee—what word of emulation or envy shall be misplaced or exaggerated on the part of those who have all else but have not this—possessors of the ten talents of genius, power, or love, destitute only of the gift of gifts, which is the conversation of God?

'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.' We awake as from the dreaming of a bright and blessed dream—the ladder planted on earth, its top reaching to heaven, and the Lord standing above it speaking—to find ourselves inmates of a commonplace prosaic darkened earth, only the sadder for the fleeting insubstantial vision. If life be indeed that which it has been called in this text and this sermon, a conversation with God in heaven, who can silence in himself the sad confession, I am living deplorably, culpably, wickedly, below my privilege and my birthright as a Christian?

And we can account for it. For, although this conversation with God can be carried on, not only in quiet seclusions and solitudes consecrated to the purpose, but in the daily routine of business, amidst the hum or the din of other voices, nay, amidst the very strife and war of tongues, by such as God hides in His pavilion and to whom He has confided His secret—yet there are conditions, one, two, and three, the breach of any one of which stops and silences it at once. There must be a ceasing from opposite and antagonistic voices: the man whose speech is with God must not sully or defile his own speech with talk which violates in any particular the triple law of piety, purity, and charity: in the silence of his own solitude he must not hold converse with in-

visible presences of vanity, lust, or ungodliness: he must not love the book which stimulates passion, he must not conjure up memories of past sinning, nor imaginations of possible sinning, however little (as he may persuade himself) designed and meditated, in the future. Also he must, not only by avoidances of evil such as have been hinted at, but by positive effort and resolution of good, earnestly set his face and his heart towards the divine presence; he must listen intently for the voice which would speak with him, and say towards it, till he can learn consciously to say to it, 'Speak—for Thy servant heareth.'

There is yet one condition more: we will end with it.

The speech of the man to his God must presuppose and proceed upon the speech of God to the man.

The two 'words' of which the texts tell are not independent words. The conversation is not between two equals, either of whom must contribute his share to the instruction and the enjoyment of the meeting. The incommensurableness, in nature and dignity, of the two speakers, while it forbids not freedom in the inferior, forbids presumption—nay, precludes it as a tone and a feeling which would jar upon, and jangle out of tune, the very melody and harmony of the converse.

God speaks, and man makes reply. It is not that on equal terms and with equal rights God and the man meet together to think out and to talk out the thing that was and that is and that shall be. 'The world by its wisdom knew not God.' 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' The word of God came, and the word of man made reply on the strength of it. This consecrates for

him the 'new and living way,' by which, not in hesitation, not as a peradventure, but in calm faith and trust—not forgetting the realities of sin and the fall, but seeing them at once recognized and overborne by a mightier revelation of love—the word of the man meets the word of his God on the strength of that 'Word made flesh' which is the reconciler and the harmonizer of the two. 'I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven; and a voice saying to me, Come up hither.'

May it be so—may God grant it—that to some heart here open before Him the thought of the two words, the word speaking and the word making reply, may have come with acceptance and with comfort this day. May some life, hitherto halting perhaps between two opinions, or sore let and hindered perhaps by besetting sin, take the decided colour henceforth of a conscious and delightful conversation with God. The moment this is realized—even dimly, even tentatively, even intermittently—there will rise out of darkness a marvellous light: earth and heaven will then be of one piece and one colour: already in more than promise, hereafter in glorious fruition, 'thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off.'

XXXII.

INCOMPLETENESS A CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL TRUE WORK.

St Matthew x. 23.

When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.

WE have here a precept, and a reason for it. Both are difficult. The precept is unusual, and the reason ambiguous.

The precept is a precept of flight. Far more heroic would have been the command to face the foe, even if he brought torture or death with him. Fanaticism would have said, The virtue of virtues is courage, and the glory of glories is martyrdom. The text is a counsel of prudence. It says, There is a great work before you, a work which requires workmen. The labourers are few at the best, and they must not be made fewer by wanton self-sacrifices. The cities of Israel are many, and if one will not have you, perhaps another will. Think of the work, think of the object, think of souls, think of the Saviour. Think of these more than of yourselves. Martyrdom itself may be a sublime selfishness. Enthusiasm may exaggerate even sacrifice—or at least, the sacrifice of the life may be nobler, more

heroic, more divine, than the sacrifice of the death. Each as God wills—but you must interpret the will of God by the exigencies of the work. Flight may be courage—if it be flight for Christ and with Christ.

Such precepts are among the evidences of the gospel. They turn to it for a testimony. Because they show that the gospel itself is no hare-brained or star-gazing enthusiasm, but a religion sober, healthful, and sensible—taking account of circumstances, discriminating between means and ends, embracing in its view time as well as eternity, the life that now is as well as that which is to come.

Such is the precept. A reason is given for it. 'For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over'—or, more literally, 'ye shall not have finished,' or 'completed'—'the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.'

The general idea is plain. Do not court martyrdom. Do not make it a point of duty to stay out a local persecution. If one place refuses you, flee to another. The cities of Israel are many. By tarrying uselessly in one, you are destroying the opportunity of others. You will not have finished them all till the night comes when no man can work.

But this general thought, of the night coming before the work of the day is complete, is expressed in an equivocal way. 'Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

What coming of the Son of Man is in view? These disciples were being sent out (it seems) on a sort of experimental mission through a region through which

Christ Himself was about to follow them in person. It is said in the case of the seventy, and it is implied in the case of the twelve, 'He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come.' Thus the text might mean that they must be expeditious, economical of time, on their journey, or He, following in their footsteps, would overtake them before the business on which they were sent was done.

So narrow and prosaic an interpretation will satisfy no one; and yet it must be recognized in passing on to a higher and more adequate.

We know that in the great prophecy of the 24th chapter of this gospel, with its parallels in the gospels of St Mark and St Luke, our Lord so describes the great final advent as to veil it under the type of a lesser and nearer. The destruction of Jerusalem, within one generation from the time then present, was no unworthy symbol, for those who were then listening, of that consummation of all things which, even to us of this late age of the world, is still future. 'Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come' might mean that they must press forward on their life-journey as heralds of Christ to the chosen people, or they would be overtaken, ere that life-journey was accomplished, by the catastrophe which must for ever close the opportunities of grace for the national Israel.

But this explanation also, like the former, though in a less degree, is felt to be inadequate. The apostles were not occupied till the destruction of Jerusalem in 'going over the cities of Israel.' The whole world was their

province. The fall of Judaism as a local and national religion was no advent of judgment or even of hindrance to them.

There remains then but one view of the text which is capable of doing justice to it. It is that which reads, in the 'coming' spoken of, the great advent, and, in the combination, 'Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel till that advent is upon you,' a warning, parabolical and typical in its language, applicable to all Christian work and to all Christian workmen in every land and age, and not least in our own.

'Israel' is a sacred name. It means far more than Canaan or Palestine. It is a reminiscence of that mysterious night-wrestling with God Himself, which ended with the saying, 'Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel—for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' Thus 'Israel' became (so to say) the theocratic title of the privileged race: and St Paul has warranted its application far beyond the limits of Judaism when he says, 'As many as walk by this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.' Israel is now, in one aspect, 'the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world:' in another, brethren—blame not the thought which has divinity as well as humanity to plead for it—in another, it is the whole created, fallen, and redeemed world of men; loved by God when He 'loved the world'—'sons of Adam,' and therefore 'sons of God.'

'The cities of Israel' are thus the homes and places of concourse of the vast human race, concerning which Christ has said, 'Go ye into all the world'—'Go ye and

make all the nations disciples'—let 'repentance and remission of sins be preached among all nations, beginning,' but only beginning, 'at Jerusalem.' It is of this world-wide and age-long commission that the saying is written, 'Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of Man be come.'

If now with this clue we attempt to grasp the moral of the text, it will be something of this kind.

The work of Christ in the world will never be finished till He comes. Not only will the workmen, one by one, be removed by death. The work itself will be cut short, unfinished, by the advent of Christ. 'Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.'

Certainly not—were it only because the work of Christ, which the second advent closes, is the carrying of His kingdom into hearts, in counteraction of that other kingdom which only His advent will put down. While there are new lives being born every day and every hour into the world, so long must the work of evangelizing not only not be finished, it must be beginning anew every morning, and they who have that work (in any sense) in hand can never reach the moment at which they can afford to sit still. 'He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet:' and that reign is a resisted and therefore a struggling empire, coming rather than come, through all the years and the ages between the coronation of the great King and the consummation of grace in glory.

If there is anything of sadness in the words, there is far more of encouragement.

Who has not felt, and felt painfully, the circumscription and boundedness of his own career, whether

in the more worldly region of ambition, or in the three nobler and loftier regions of knowledge, of usefulness, and of ministry? Who has not said many times, whether of any particular study, or of any particular effort, or in the retrospect of a life, 'I have spent my strength in vain and for nought?' Who, to speak of persons capable of deeper thoughts and feelings, is not at this time oppressed and overwhelmed by the sense of endlessness, as he contemplates the mass of misery which has to be relieved, the multitude of ignorant and degraded people demanding, though for the most part in mute voices, the help of humanity and Christianity to rescue them, the complication, beyond counting or measuring, of difficulties, political, social, national, besetting at this moment the minds, hearts, and souls whose business it is to cope with them? Now I seem to read in these words of Jesus Christ that sort of comfort which consists in recognition—in the not ignoring and not disregarding this particular cause of depression to which I have given the name of a sense of endlessness. Jesus Christ says here, I tell you before it come, that the work of good—with the heaven and earth that are now—is essentially interminable: it will never be finished: 'ye shall not have gone over all the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.'

Thus He ministers to our necessities by warning us against several mistakes which are apt to spoil and ruin true work.

One of these is the demand beforehand for a roundness and compactness of defined duty, which is not often to be found and which certainly must not be waited for. There are multitudes of well-disposed persons standing about (as it were) in earth's market-place till

some particular employer of labour shall visibly and audibly hire them. They must have a neighbouring vineyard pointed out to them, they must have a regular engagement, certain hours of work fixed, and so much a day for doing it. All this is contrary to the idea of work for Christ. It does not admit of this sort of definition. If it is real work, in the estimate of heaven, it is something which will never be exactly defined, in prospect or retrospect. It will never be finished. It is very pleasant if it so happens that now and then, for a time, a particular task is set, which will take just so many weeks or months and can then be given in accomplished. But the very fact of its definiteness proves that it is not the life-work and not the Christ-work of which this text tells. That is never finished till the Son of Man comes.

(1) One reason for this has already been suggested. It lies in the mere sequence of human generations. Births and deaths are incessant. Every birth introduces new work, and every death removes, or ought to remove, an old workman. If a generation were born in one day and died in one day, it is conceivable that its work also might be self-contained, and that the demand for a clean sweep and a clear start might in some sense be complied with. But this interlacing of lives is fatal to this superficial neatness and completeness of management. 'One generation goeth, and another generation cometh;' but they are both on the stage at once during a large part of the lifetime of each, and the board is never cleared for a new beginning.

(2) Another and a deeper reason lies in the nature of the work.

The most real work of all—perhaps the only kind of work which is quite real—is that intangible impalpable thing which we call influence. The work that can be finished is always more or less mechanical. You can write so many letters on business, and go to rest having finished them. You can attend so many meetings, settle so many accounts, plead so many causes, give so many judgments, and, just conceivably, leave no arrears. You can pay so many visits to the sick, compose and preach so many sermons, lecture so many times in the week, and having gone the round, say, It is done. This kind of work is capable of completion: it can be undertaken, it can be recompensed, in due course it can be retired from. But such work, so done, not only has an end, it is also self-comprised and self-contained, and has no direct action upon 'the cities of Israel' which are the scope and sphere of the Christian evangelist.

Influence is the thing which Christ looks for, and it is an indefinite and so an interminable thing. When He says, 'Ye shall not have finished till I come for you,' He shows what in His estimate is real work. It is work for others—action upon the cities of the human Israel—such as shall in some way help to prepare men for Himself: and this is, in other words, the putting forth of influence upon them for good—that mysterious power which is the 'flowing in' of one spirit upon another spirit, the communication of thought and feeling and purpose, real in the being from whom it comes, real in the being into whom it enters.

How can work of this kind ever be finished? Apply the rule and the line to it, try to count, measure, or weigh it, it slips from your hand, it escapes, it eludes, it

vanishes. Never while the breath is in the body can it cease to operate: never is it more substantial, never is it more potent, than in dying moments. When the last call comes, it interrupts without finishing: cities of Israel are still unvisited when the Son of Man comes for His workman.

(3) We can see one other reason for this arrangement, the incompleteness of all work that is worth the name—and it is, the security thus given for the salubriousness of labour.

There might be something of elation, something certainly of satisfaction, in the contemplation of work done, if the man could see it all labelled and docketed—so many tasks performed, so many results harvested—and then carry his passport with him into a world of reward and recompense.

And true indeed it is that, when the dead man has died in the Lord, his works (in some sense) follow him. But there lies the difference. They do not accompany, they do not herald, the workman. They are not his passports nor his credentials: they lag and loiter behind him, still influencing and to influence a few that miss and that mourn him; a few more than these—perhaps even a church or a nation stirred by his memory into a brighter zeal and a deeper devotion.

But 'where is boasting? It is excluded.' By what thought, by what fact, excluded? By the thought, by the fact, not so much of the many imperfections, faults, and sins of the workman, but by this rather—by the thought, by the fact, of the multitude of the cities of Israel, and of the impossibility of compassing them; of the incompleteness of all work that is worth the name,

and of the surprise which interrupts it by the advent or by the death.

What room, brethren, is left for self-complacency in one who enters into the thought of the infiniteness of possibility, and compares it with the limitation, with the littleness, with the almost nothingness, of performance?

All these 'cities of Israel' which hold so many homes and souls of mankind, all these waiting for the evangelist—all to be visited or left unvisited, and with consequences untold, by one who with all his toil and all his zeal will yet most certainly be surprised by the advent before he has 'finished' them—who shall have the presumption, who shall have the heart, to tell up the steps he has taken, to count the successes he has achieved, even if he has any such to report in the line of Christ's work, when he thinks of the untrodden waste which surrounds him, or of the sudden summons which shall end, without finishing, his labour?

The man who can reflect with complacency upon his work—if we were speaking of earthly things, we should say—shows the lowness of his standard, confesses himself devoid of genius because of aspiration: as we are speaking of higher than earthly things, we must say—shows that he has not yet set his hand to the plough of true labour, inasmuch as he 'counts himself to have apprehended,' and therefore knows nothing of a work which will be unfinished at the advent.

We are thus brought to regard incompleteness as one of the characteristics of all work that deserves the name. How far more do we augur of eventual renown from the young speech or young poem which is full of faults than from the smooth voluble easy achievement over

which criticism is dumb. How full of promise is the embarrassment of the young minister who knows not how to begin his pastoral duties—asks himself, Who am I, and what is my father's house, that I should wear the ephod and lead the prayers of this people?—in comparison with the assured look and confident voice of some comrade who thinks himself ten times his superior, as though 'the word of God had come out from him, or had come unto him alone.' Incompleteness all can allow for: unfinishedness, even till the advent, is Christ's word for the true evangelizing.

It is comforting, as well as stimulating. Yes, to have it explained to us that we shall never have finished the cities of Israel, that we shall still have left much undone, that the only thing is to be doing—doing with a right aim and a real devotion; quite aware that not all will come of our doing that we looked and hoped for; willing just to say, 'I have laboured (to my own thinking) in vain—yet is my work with my God'—this, if not satisfaction, is encouragement: this puts man in his place: this makes it wholesome for him to labour, by making it impossible for him to 'burn incense to his net.'

In this, as in all things, Christ Himself gave us an example. What was His own work below—with reverence would we say it? Had He Himself 'finished the cities of Israel' when He left them for Calvary, or left them from Olivet? Was His a triumphant progress, from strength to strength, from glory to glory, culminating in the universal confession, at least from His own nation, that Jesus was the Lord? When numbers are given us, the sum of the disciples on the great

ascension day in Jerusalem was a hundred and twenty, or the risen Lord showed Himself in Galilee to five hundred brethren—what are these as the product of a divine life below, or as the sample of a world claimed as His own?

Nay, but even now, eighteen centuries afterwards, how is it?

It is written in prophetic Scripture, as the address of God Himself to the exalted Christ at His right hand, 'Rule Thou (not over, but) in the midst among Thine enemies.' The rule is real and strong—but the rule is not unresisted. 'A great door and effectual is opened'—but 'there are many adversaries.' 'We see not yet all things put under Him—but we see Jesus crowned,' and the rest shall follow in its season.

Meanwhile 'the disciple is not greater than his Lord.' It is a sign of discipleship that its work is incomplete.

But it must not therefore be a languid or a faint-hearted work. The word which comforts stimulates too. The cities of Israel are being visited: the work of good is in progress: the leaven is leavening the lump: but the end, and therefore the success, is not yet. See the evangelist at work in the streets and lanes of the city. See the long days and late nights which attest the earnestness of the toilers in the work of humanizing through evangelizing, of civilizing through Christianizing. Little comes of it, you say: the tide of vice, misery, and cruelty sets as strongly as ever over our great London on both banks of its ancient river—sample and specimen, but too exact in its resemblance, of our beloved England in its towns and its villages everywhere: what profit is there, you begin to ask, of the evangelist? 'Into this

captious but intenible sieve he still pours in the waters of his love' and of his devotion—might he not let it alone?

O say not, we answer, that little or that nothing comes of it. Say not that one reformed life, say not that one rescued soul, that one happy home, that one comforted deathbed, is nothing. It is treason to humanity to say, in this sense, that *not all* is *nothing*. Say only that, as Jesus Christ prophesied, the cities of Israel will not be finished till He come. Say that meanwhile there must be a ragged edge to all work that deserves the name—many a rent undarned in the seamless robe, many a sore heart and many a weeping eye on an earth of which sin has made havoc. It must needs be. It cost more to redeem a world—it cost more to create new heavens and a new earth—than that a few lives or a few centuries should finish it. Yet in the very incompleteness is the omen of eventual perfectness. That incompleteness tells of labour—labour the more heroic in that it lacks an instant recompense. That incompleteness means the giving of thousands and ten thousands of precious lives, which might have been lavished on 'the three things that are in the world,' lust, ambition, and covetousness, to a noble, a generous, a magnificent enterprise—the winning back of the cities of Israel to the Lord from whom they have wandered—and, in the way to it, the devotion of themselves, heart, soul, and spirit, to a service which looks for its wage to a world beyond death. If this is incompleteness—if, without an unfinished toil here, there could not be such elevation, such heroism, such devotion—do we not see at once why all is not yet that shall be—why there

should be delay, why there should be disappointment, why there should be hope long deferred and great patience exercised—were it but to try that gold sevenfold in the fire, which 'shall be unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ?'

One after another falls on sleep, not having 'finished the cities of Israel,' but having done the work of an evangelist in his day.

Birthdays of saints are their deathdays. Today is the 75th anniversary of the death of one of them—saint, evangelist, confessor, I had almost said martyr, in one. Well may Cambridge honour, if it needs not to revive, his memory, by a special and deeply interesting ceremony of the week upon which we have entered.

I count it a sign of the times, one of the bright and beautiful features of a period not without its anxieties, that the name of Henry Martyn has passed out of the keeping of one party, however honourable in itself and venerable in its associations, into the possession of the catholic church of God in England, of which he was a dutiful son in her doctrine, her ritual, and her discipline. To the present Primate, I think, in large degree, we owe it—who, in his former diocese of Truro found himself seated in Martyn's birthplace, and in his rising cathedral of Truro determined to assert for him an honoured place and an everlasting memorial.

Cambridge at least shall claim him for her own, and praise God for him.

We must not anticipate topics which belong to another occasion and to worthier speakers. But one or two lessons seem to suggest themselves, in close connexion with the subject chosen for this sermon, and

deeply impressive in their bearing upon this honoured and beloved audience.

'Are there not twelve hours in the day?' was our Lord's reply, in proverb, to those who would have diverted Him from duty by an alarm for His life. At the age of three and thirty that sacred life was cut short by crucifixion: only three years and a half of it had been allowed for ministry. Yet that day (who shall gainsay it?) had its twelve hours in full tale. The constituent hour was short, but the resulting day was complete.

Human nature wearies itself in lamentation over what it counts a short life—measuring it, as alone human nature can, by its days, months, and years. 'Premature' is its title for a death at the age of thirty, forty, or fifty. But so they count not in heaven. The little life closed at the age of ten years or twelve is complete in God's reckoning, or it would not have been taken. It has done its work. It has awakened some dormant affection. It has borne a silent witness for purity. It has turned the heart of a father to neglected wife or misunderstood son. It has kindled the flame of divine love in the heart of a nurse or in the heart of a governess.

Henry Martyn died at the age of one and thirty. Into those few years were crowded, first the grammar school of Truro, with its noble memories of Cardew the master and Kempthorne the monitor; then the early start at Cambridge, developing into the senior wrangler of nineteen; then the awakening piety, under influences of friendship and sorrow—the most powerful factors the father's death and the sister's pleading, the dead Brainerd and the living Simeon; then the self-dedication of the

Ely Ordination, and the Sunday and week-day ministries at Lolworth and in Cambridge; then the resolution for a missionary life, and the thrilling anguish of the severance; then the nine months' voyage to India, with the battle scenes of the Cape and the 'fighting with beasts' on shipboard; then the four years' ministry at Dinapore and Cawnpore, with its long toils in translating and its eager efforts to evangelize; then the baffled hopes and humble self-resignations; then the cruel journeyings through Persia and Asia; at last the desolate death at Tocat, and the silence settling down upon the tomb in the land of strangers. How mournful a commentary upon the unfinished work among the cities of Israel! How incomplete, man must acknowledge, that work, that toil, that achievement!

But were there, or were there not, twelve hours in that day? Would that life, prolonged to threescore and ten or fourscore years, first in the service of the University, and then in the ministry of a college living, with some pulpit and some platform pleadings for home missions and foreign, have been, on the whole, fuller or more productive? Was it not worth while that that life should be cut short, half or not half spent? Had not those one and thirty years a fragrance, an aroma, yes, and a fruitfulness, out of all proportion to the respectable, the useful, the exemplary long lives of a thousand men? Has not that life kindled a hundred lives? True, it had not gone over all the cities of Israel. True, it had not finished anything. Even its labours in translating, so earnest and so persevering, were not perhaps an entire success. Sometimes perhaps its very self-sacrifice was a little visionary: its cherished objects

were not perhaps always what the world, even the religious world, would call quite worth while, viewed (certainly) in the retrospect. But what then? The twelve hours were in that day: three quarters of a century afterwards it is shining, burning, kindling still.

It was the hero-life of my boyhood. I would commend it in my old age to a later generation of my University. You will find in it a beautiful simplicity, a touching tenderness, a powerful attraction. I do not think you will find it dull: I do not think that you ought to find it depressing. If you ever think so, listen to the testimony of those who tell from their own recollection of his love of literature and poetry, of his delightful company, of his merry laugh. No, that young senior wrangler, that hasty warm-hearted friend, that intense lover who gave up even love for Jesus Christ, he was no gloomy fanatic, he was no cold-blooded censor, he was a *man*—very human, yet lifting his humanity upwards, till it held communion and fellowship with Him who took the manhood into God.

Listen then to two or three of his own testimonies, ye who have still to shape and form your course, earthward or heavenward. Some of them are early testimonies; many of them written from the very courts and gardens which your steps tread now, from rooms still occupied by some of yourselves, from the very interior of a life singularly conservative, amidst all change, in its surroundings.

'When I look back on every day, I may say I have lost it. So much time misspent, so many opportunities lost of doing good, so little zeal for God, or love to man; so much vanity, and levity, and pride, and selfish-

ness, that I may well tremble at the world of iniquity within. If ever I am saved, it must be by grace.'

'I rose at half-past five, and walked a little before chapel-hour. I endeavoured to maintain affectionate thoughts of God as my Father, on awaking in the morning. Setting a watch over my thoughts, and endeavouring to make them humble and devout, I find to be an excellent preparation for prayer, and for a right spirit during the day.'

'I am convinced that Christian experience is not a delusion: whether mine is so or not, will be seen at the last day.'

'Whenever I can say, Thy will be done—Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God—it is like throwing ballast out of an air-balloon: my soul ascends immediately, and light and happiness shine around me.'

'Blessed be God, *I feel myself to be His minister.* This thought, which I can hardly describe, came to me in the morning. I wish for no service but the service of God—to labour for souls on earth, and to do His will in heaven.'

'How careful should I and all be in our ministry, not to break the bruised reed! Alas, do I think that a schoolboy, a raw academic, should be likely to lead the hearts of men? What a knowledge of men, and acquaintance with the Scriptures, what communion with God, and study of my own heart, ought to prepare me for the awful work of a messenger from God on the business of the soul!'

'I am born for God only. Christ is nearer to me than father or mother or sister—a nearer relation, a more affectionate friend—I rejoice to follow Him, and

to love Him. Blessed Jesus! Thou art all I want—a forerunner to me in all I ever shall go through, as a Christian, a minister, or a missionary.'

Yet once more—his very last words—dated from the precincts of his death-city of Tocat on the 6th of October, ten days before the last end.

'No horses being to be had, I had an unexpected repose. I sat in the orchard, and thought, with sweet comfort and peace, of my God—in solitude my company, my friend and comforter. Oh! when shall time give place to eternity? When shall appear that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? There there shall in no wise enter in anything that defileth... none of those corruptions which add to the miseries of mortality shall be seen or heard of any more.'

Let me add, without comment, the closing words of his pious and loving biographer.

'There was something deeply affecting in the thought, that, where he sank into his grave, men were strangers to him and to his God. No friendly hand was stretched out, no sympathizing voice was heard, at that time when the tender offices of Christian affection are so soothing and so delightful: no human bosom was there on which he could recline his head in the hour of languishing. *Paucioribus lacrymis compositus es*, is a sentiment to which the feelings of nature and friendship respond. Yet the painful reflection cannot be admitted, *In novissimâ luce desideravere aliquid oculi tui.* The Saviour, doubtless, was with His servant in his last conflict, and he with Him the instant it terminated.'

XXXIII.

SOME LESSONS OF AGE.

Psalm xxxvii. 25.

I have been young, and now am old.

THE text introduces a single experience of the old age of which it speaks. 'I have been young, and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' It is a personal experience: the writer only could be a judge of that. How far it is the uniform or the universal experience, might be an interesting question: but, if that question were answered in the negative, there would be no real contradiction of Scripture, for in these things there is no doctrine and no revelation. And certainly the psalmist does not say that the sons of good parents have a charmed or privileged life, such that, whatever they themselves may develope into, of folly or vice, they are warranted against the consequence. He speaks of such as walk in the righteous father's steps, and such, he says, he has never seen or known to be driven to beg their bread. In Christian days, and in theory at least, we have enlarged our view of life to two worlds; and, without affecting an unreal language as to things good and evil, we try to think more of the great, and less of the little future—more of the eternal happiness which can-

not be shaken, and less of the temporal prosperity which was naturally the all in all of blessing and recompence before immortality was brought to light by the Gospel.

But the applications of the text are manifold; and, without disparaging the psalmist's use of it, we may perhaps say that there are other lessons which come to mind even more forcibly, when we presume to preach on his words, 'I have been young, and now am old.'

Between youth and age, in one sense, there is a great gulf fixed. Certainly between the psalmist's youth and age—if king David was (as the title says) the poet of this psalm—there was a great gulf fixed. Between the shepherd boy of Bethlehem and 'the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob'—still more, between the noble guileless youth and the sinner of the great double sin which clouded the latter day of the life—there was so wide and so deep a chasm that the very identity might seem to have been broken, and the continuity of the being snapt in twain. But it was not so. 'This *I* have been,' he says, 'and this *I* am.'

Between youth and age there is seldom an entire intelligence or an entire sympathy. And yet surely the old ought to have something interesting to say to the young—something which none but they can say—and which can be said in a tone the very opposite either of coldness or of distance or of assumption. So addressed, I have found the young very willing to listen. Far as they are at present removed from the speaker, they are quite conscious that the tide of their own life is setting his way. Improbable as it may at present seem to them, they know that one day they will have gone to him, though he can never more return to them. Curiosity

bids them find out what they can about that undiscovered country, from which a voice comes to them, saying, When you reach it, you will find this and this its feeling, its experience, its regret, or its aspiration. If, in addition to this, anything can be said as to the best way of making the journey—anything as to the secret of 'a good old age'—what is to be done and what is to be avoided in the start—what provisions are indispensable, what accoutrements would be helps and what encumbrances, what companions would be congenial and what insufferable, as the long route unfolds itself, and the terminus is at last discernible in the distance—there will be no lack of listeners to such discourse, provided only that the speaker is careful to follow the example here set him by the psalmist, and to emphasize the identity of his own past and present, 'I am old, but—I have been young.'

There is a sense, and a very solemn sense, in which the gulf between youth and age is more imaginary than real. We are all ready to suppose that we shall have some notice—that we shall not pass quite unconsciously from young men into old. There will surely be some note of warning: there will surely be a point—day, month, or year—up to which we are in the one category, and beyond which we are in the other. The very putting the thought into words shows its futility. It is not so. One age of life shades off into another: each particular day is of the same piece and colour with yesterday and with tomorrow: the only notice given us comes too late: we hear some one casually speak of us as old men, and we wake up with a start to resent or to realize.

The moral of the remark lies in it. We were ima-

gining that there was a certain point of transition from youth to age, and that at that point the faults and follies of the one age would naturally fall off from us, to be replaced (if at all) by another set of failings, much less violent, far less serious, of which at all events we know nothing at present, and which we must deal with as we can if and when they come. At all events, we were saying to ourselves, we shall have got rid, without effort or trouble, of those 'youthful lusts,' as St Paul calls them, which have been our chief plague and torment till then; and the only fear is, lest we should die before that more equable and reposeful age comes, and so before we have shaken off those deadlier faults and vices which we all know it would not be safe to carry with us to the threshold of the life to come.

Alas, brethren, there is no such transition, and no such barrier, and no such gulf fixed, as this kind of talk presupposes. We may well doubt whether death itself will break off anything but the power of sinning—not its binding chain, not its debasing guilt. Certainly old age will not. The continuity is never broken. The tenor of the life is one, and but one. If the young man has let himself alone, the old man will be the same in all but the excuses popularly made for him, and the interest and the pathos attaching to every youthful thing. If the strong hand of virtue, if the mightier force of grace, has not cleansed and purified the young soul, there is no moment at which old things will have passed away and all things have become new: the child is father of the man, and the man of the old man, and the old man of the everlasting being which 'lifts up the eyes' to bliss or woe 'in Hades.'

This is all very serious, and I think it is one chief lesson which age, as it has opportunity, would press upon youth. Young man, it says with terrible positiveness, *Nullum tempus occurrit peccato*—No length of time bars sin. A man may die a sinner a hundred years old—and a sinner, in all but the zest and all but the sparkle, of the same sort and kind as when he was a boy and a young man. No sin dies a natural death. It cannot be conquered without a battle. It may be a battle in which (in some sense) Satan casts out Satan. That is when pride, or ambition, or fear of the world, or dread of consequences, prevails against some particular evil tendency, and, so to say, the body of sin lops off one of its members. Such is the history of many reforms and many amendments. Heaven keeps no register of them. They are neither here nor there as to the everlasting life of the man. This is *one* battle. Many never fight even this battle. Many go on in their sins, weakly, miserably, helplessly, till they are found out far on, or till they die in them, late or early, and go hence to be no more seen.

There is another battle with sin, quite different in history and character, in course and end. This is when a man, knowing that there is no gulf fixed, by age or lapse of time, between him and sinning—knowing that no man sleeps off or dreams off or simply outlasts or outlives his sins—and knowing that he must not risk eternity on the chance of truth (whether taught by experience or taught by revelation) being after all a lie—tries upon himself the gospel remedy; watches and prays, and prays and watches, on the faith of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and, with many failures and many defeats, yet withstands and is found

standing—conquering one by one the sins of youth and the sins of age, till he may cast his crown before the throne and ascribe salvation to God and the Lamb. To recommend this course—to press its reasonableness, its necessity, its urgency, upon such as have ears to hear—this is why age speaks to youth, and this is what it would say—'Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for this shall bring a man peace at the last.' Or else this—'Blessed are they that have washed their robes betimes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

This is one lesson. But there is another.

'I made haste,' says another psalmist, 'and prolonged not the time, to keep Thy commandments.' Long before extreme age there will come a time when fatigue and weariness are the law of the being. That play of limb and frame, that activity for activity's sake, that love of taking each step twice and thrice over for the very joy of movement, which is characteristic of the child and the boy growing into freedom, and which survives in the robust games and athletic sports of the early manhood, has long been exchanged for a more staid and sober alacrity, ere it subsides for ever, on the first approach of age, into that most opposite of experiences, to which nothing is so welcome as the permission to sit still—a consciousness of incomplete invigoration ushering in the day, and a sense of aching weariness heralding the resting. At last the grasshopper is a burden—and the man who was once on fire for national reforms and ecclesiastical innovations acquiesces without a sense of

inconsistency in the thing that is, or feels (if he be a man of higher mould and making) that most distressing of experiences—a mind full of projects which he has no strength to work out, and a life of which the many yesterdays have crushed out the few tomorrows, nothing done of all that he once dreamed of, and himself no longer among the labourers of the world-wide and age-long workfield.

'I have been young, and now am old'—and therefore I know how long before death ends the stirring and bustling work-day, not necessarily because the mind is sleeping, not necessarily because the spirit is unwilling, but because a depressing weariness has come over the bodily frame, and that which has not been enterprised during the morning and noonday hours must for ever be left unattempted now that the sun slopes to its setting.

Therefore I say, Yours, young men, is the time of enterprise and the time of efficiency: waste not one precious hour in giving yourselves to your task. The fields of life and time are white to the harvest: offer yourselves betimes to the great Lord, that you may not be surprised by the late evening when no man can work. Let the word 'Too young' never cross the door of your lips. Dread only lest the word 'Too old' be wrung from you by a sense of growing feebleness before you have done one stroke of steady sturdy work for the Lord who bought you. Begin, even now, even here, to do something. Economize time, not for study only, but for charity. Without one word or one thought of things far beyond or high above you—magnificent enterprises of philanthropy or evangelizing, for which, if ever, the

time is not yet—look out for the nearest and humblest task which is lying undone in your parish at home or at your door here, and do that. If you feel that at the present moment you are scarcely equal to any work of a directly spiritual nature, then take up something merely useful or merely kind—take it up, not as the highest thing, but as the humblest and therefore fittest. In these days, of life of all kinds, you need not wait an hour to find something to do for God and your brother—something which friend or neighbour, layman or clergyman, can tell you of, and which perhaps is languishing, and making good hearts languish with it, just for lack of such an offer of help as you are too shy or too timid to utter. There is work for all—good honest work for all inclinations and for all capacities.

And this I say, brethren, the time is short. Before you know it, you will be passing into the ranks of the middle-aged: and the reasons which are strong now will be overwhelming then for declining to attempt anything—for snatching as you can 'a little sleep and a little slumber and a little folding of the hands to sleep'—till the night of nights cometh when no man can work.

The advance of years should teach wisdom. Some reflections, some inferences from facts seen and noted, are forced upon it.

Let me utter two of them—the gravest possible, and the most urgent.

(1) One is a reflection upon what I will call the everlastingness of virtue. You would not smile at the obviousness, the commonplaceness, of the saying, if you could realize your arrival at the threescore years

and ten. You will have seen then the shipwreck of so many hopes, the discomfiture of so many ambitions, the disconsolateness of so many lives, the ruin of so many homes, just by reason of men (so to say) entering the lists with virtue. Sometimes it has been attempted even by philosophies falsely so called, unnaming and renaming sin itself; travestying it into a mere mistake, if even that—a mere misfortune, if even that—a mere imperfection or immaturity, marking a particular stage in the growth of the man or of the race, to be developed some day into a grace and into a robustness which, without passing through that stage, could not have been reached, could not have been realized. Sometimes it has been attempted by some conspicuous alliance between vice and high station, or between vice and wit, or between vice and genius—hoping to bear down and overmaster the received estimate, the old nomenclature, of good and evil—the world looking on, the while, in suspense or in complaisance or in flattery, to see if peradventure the effort can succeed, if by bridge, ford, or tunnel the great gulf can be made passable. Sometimes, far oftener, far more hopefully because far more insidiously, it has been attempted by a general relaxation and softening of the sharpness and severity of morals, a tone of civility and compliment and spurious charity, refraining from calling anything by its name, dealing much in whisper and innuendo, yet none the less fertile and prolific in scandal, to the utter destruction of the peace of homes and the comfort of lives—only refusing to judge a righteous judgment, or so much as to be serious over sins, vices, and crimes.

Against all this the experience of the threescore years

and ten enters its stern and solemn protest. Six millenniums of history bear witness to the futility of the endeavour to remove the landmark between vice and virtue. Explain it as you may, there is around and above us a mighty something which makes for righteousness. Theories of indifference, fashions of immorality, alliances of might against right, have upon them what St Paul calls the 'evident token of perdition.' 'Though they toss themselves, yet can they not pass over' that boundary of the 'perpetual decree' which fences virtue. The gulf between wrong and right is still fixed. We must recognize it or perish. The thing that is right is the thing that is—and the man that is against it is by that very fact 'dead while he liveth.' 'I have been young, and now am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken;' and, if for a moment I have seen the wrongdoer 'flourishing like the green bay tree,' soon 'I went by, and lo, he was not—I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found.'

Think it not an unreal thing, brethren—think it not, on the other hand, a thing of course—to be bidden this day to make your choice for a life-time between wrong and right, between vice and virtue. Let it be known on which side you are. Let not cowardice, let not courtesy, let not good-nature or the fear to wound, prevail with you even for once to smile at or to smile with evil. It is just these small compromises or small remonstrances, which mark you, nay, which make you, on one side or on the other side in the war of good and evil. This is what gives a tone to the life: this is what influences a generation. It shows the real bent of the man. It affects the society in which he lives. It

is thus that he forms his habit of viewing things—and this is even more, in relation to his general influence, than his way of acting. I set before you this day death and life; 'the thing that is right,' and 'peace at the last'—or 'the thing that is evil,' and 'the second death.'

(2) The everlastingness of virtue is one testimony which age bears to youth. The other shall be, the everlastingness of the gospel.

'The everlasting gospel' St John calls it, or one utterance of it, in one passage of his great apocalypse. No title can be more indelibly inscribed upon it for the later age of human life.

The same St John, if we rightly read the words of his first epistle, makes the full appreciation of Jesus Christ *the* characteristic of a Christian old age.

The infancy of believing knows the atonement. Its sins are forgiven, and it knows the Father. The young man is predominantly militant. 'The word of God abides in him, and he overcomes the wicked one.' It is reserved for the old man—it is his one twice-repeated characteristic—to 'know Him that is from the beginning,' the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I think that this is so. 'I have been young, and now am old'—and I seem to see as I saw not once how 'such a high priest,' just such, 'became us.'

O, brethren, when a man looks back upon his life—from its latter end, at last from its latest day; when he feels the irreparableness side by side with the condemningness of the past, and has to enquire of himself what is to be done—what is to be done—with this past which yet is his present, with this present which he prays God may not quite be his future—I ask you what can

be his hope, what can be his peradventure of hope, if not the very revelation of the gospel, and the very Saviour who is its life?

Attempts are made, in all shapes and kinds, to adapt this gospel to the so-called science and the so-called progress of an age so far on as ours in date and so high up as ours in attainment. We are encouraged to hope that before long there will be a general agreement in a Christianity relieved of miracle, disencumbered of dogma—a Christianity agreeing to live and to let live, to fill a sociable place among the religions, and to leave on one side those distinctive doctrines which do but distress, distract, and dissipate.

Brethren, however such promises may look to the young, they have no attraction for the man upon whom the ends of the world are come.

A Christianity toned and diluted to the taste of what calls itself modern thought must ever be a thing 'without form and void.' Certainly it was not this which either created or beautified a Christendom—not this which has nerved weak men and women and children for martyrdom, or toppled down the old thrones of idolatry and slavery, or purified (where it has been purified) the pestilential atmosphere of tyranny and cruelty and shameful licentiousness. Something grander and nobler, something supernatural, was wanted to do what has been done by the gospel—how much more to do that which it *shall* do, when it shall have made the kingdoms of the world in deed and in truth the one kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and when, as it is written, God shall at last have 'gathered together

the all things,—things in heaven and things on earth—in the one Christ.'

There are two things which old age, if not youth, will demand in its Christianity, and without which it will none of it.

The first of these is a forgiveness pure and simple of all that is past, through the alone merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee,' is a gospel 'new every morning'—fresh, to its latest day, from heaven. The angel, the more than angel, of the great apocalypse can fly with it between earth and heaven, and into the dry bones of self and the fall 'a spirit of life from God' will enter with it from the four winds. Let me face, on the strength of this gospel, days when flesh and heart faileth—days when no longer aught can be done, when all must lie low for ever under the mighty hand of God. Let no conditions be appended to this more than angelic proclamation—neither of antecedent fitness nor of subsequent perfection. These things, and such as these, take the salt and the life out of it. Let me just look to the cross, and live.

Along with this, the primary and fundamental proclamation, from the great heaven, of mercy and absolution, there must be, in the gospel for the man who has been young but now is old, the unveiling of a Person, divine and human, able to sympathize, mighty to save, whom to know is life, whom to serve is freedom. Forgiveness itself is flat and cold, without a Forgiver: absolution, without an Absolver, is a thing when I want a person. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved—and thy house.'

'I have been young, and now am old'—and I tell thee,

young man, when thou shalt be standing where I stand, thou wilt want this—nothing else will suffice thee. Therefore lay thine account for it now. So shape thy life, so school thy thought, so wing thy prayer, that 'in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall,' thou mayest find 'the name which is above every name' a strong tower—'run into it, and be safe.'

We believe that it is the business of this age, this almost last decade of the 19th century, by its legalization of open speech, if it be even the speech of the infidel or the blasphemer, to bring into sharper contrast the features of friend and foe, and to constrain a man, for mere honesty's sake, to take a side in the mighty controversy, to range himself (let us hope it) more decidedly under Christ's banner against the three confederate powers—always confederate where Christ in person is in the field—of world, flesh, and devil—first in the heart, then in the life, then on the larger scale in which other hearts and other lives are lost or won for heaven. 'There came and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and He strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when He had spoken unto me, I was strengthened.'

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. 'God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.'

Yet two words remain to be spoken.

In this University church today I should feel that something was wanting if the preacher did not give one word of respectful sorrow to the memory of our chosen representative in the great council of the nation, the honoured and lamented Beresford Hope.

Politics must be silent, absent, here. But they may be silent or absent, and yet leave this man—leave all that was characteristic of him: for the characteristic of the man—all will agree—was his independence.

It is a blameless and beautiful life to look back upon, as I can look back upon it from undergraduate days and remember nothing in it that would not bear the scrutiny of the sunbeam.

The church may well mourn him. For he was her devout and devoted son, her munificent benefactor, her dauntless champion in honour and dishonour, in good report and ill—most of all, in the latter.

But I think that England mourns him too; were it but for this—that he suffered not himself to be trampled underfoot and ground to powder by the Juggernaut of party; that he was willing to stand alone, if need be, in the maintenance of principle, and never suffered principle to be moulded or manipulated by considerations of that sort of convenience which men seek to dignify by the more respectable titles of expediency or policy.

We have other such men. These late days of trial have brought them out as gold from the furnace.

But his was a religious, not merely a political independence. He sought nothing and he gained nothing by it, save the testimony of his conscience and the respect of good men.

Peace be with him. May another likeminded with him in sensitiveness of conscience, likeminded with him in delicacy of honour, likeminded with him in tenacity of purpose, likeminded with him in fervour of faith, likeminded with him in munificence of piety, be found, if it be by long search, to replace him. And may his

example 'provoke very many' to go forth from this place to 'play the man' in England.

Finally, I must ask you, as you leave the church today, to 'remember the poor.'

Many times in the last quarter of a century I have pleaded the same cause with those who have occupied these stalls and filled these galleries.

Not always in vain. Once, in response to my pleading, the definite sum of one hundred pounds was given on the instant to these poor struggling churches of Barnwell and Chesterton.

I cannot expect often, if ever, to plead this cause in the future. 'I have been young, and now am old.' Let me plead it yet once more with all my strength today.

'I have been young, and now am old'—but one feature of life changes not. 'The poor ye have always with you'—if it were but to embody to you an invisible Person; if it were but to realize to you the Christ, absent and present, who said once on earth, who says now from heaven, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it to me.'

These neighbouring churches, with their streets and lanes of poor people, how beautiful it is, yet how natural it ought to be—in the spiritual sense of natural—that they owe to this University, largely to its younger members, their living ministry, their very means of grace.

You are practising here on this annual occasion for a life of service. It may be, as men speak, a sacred life, a consecrated life, a life calling itself ministry. It may be this, or it may not be. But, at all events, 'what God hath cleansed'—the social life, the business life, the

professional life, the political life, whichever of these or whatever it be—'what God hath cleansed, that call not thou, make not thou, common.'

And you are practising by this act of charity for the whole of the life-day—its onward course, its meridian, its waning, its sunset. You are realizing to yourselves, by what is always so valuable, an act, and an act done in God's special presence, the characteristic of all life that is worth the name—'no man liveth to himself.'

Let this be your thought, beloved brethren, as you resolve in your hearts that you will not give today that which costs you nothing. Let your offering cost you something—some little self-denial of pleasure or luxury in the week that comes after—some little exercise of that charity which 'seeketh not her own.'

And may He whose we are—from whom and through whom and to whom are all things, in whom we live and move and have our being, carry you so safely, dear friends and brothers, across the waves of this troublesome world, that finally you may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with Him world without end, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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